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for United States security interests in
Northeast Asia**

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THE POTENTIAL FOR KOREAN REUNIFICATION IN A POST-COLD WAR
ENVIRONMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES SECURITY
INTERESTS IN NORTHEAST ASIA

by

Eric N. Reeves
Captain, United States Air Force
B.A., Indiana University, 1986

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	THE DIVISION OF KOREA	5
A.	JAPANESE OCCUPATION	5
B.	KOREAN NATIONALISM	10
C.	US-USSR OCCUPATION	15
D.	UNITED NATIONS INTERVENTION	22
III.	REUNIFICATION POLICIES	29
A.	1948-1960 (SYNGMAN RHEE)	30
B.	1960-1961 (CHANG MYON)	41
C.	1961-1979 (PARK CHUNG HEE)	43
D.	1979-1980 (CHOI KYU HA)	50
E.	1980-1988 (CHUN DOO HWAN)	52
F.	1988-1992 (ROH TAE WOO)	58
G.	POST-1992 (KIM YOUNG SAM)	62
IV.	POST-COLD WAR CONSIDERATIONS	69
A.	POLITICAL-MILITARY	69
B.	ECONOMIC	75
C.	SOCIO-CULTURAL	78
D.	FOREIGN RELATIONS	81

1. United States	81
2. Russia	84
3. China	86
4. Japan	88
V. OPTIONS FOR THE KOREAN PENINSULA	95
A. STEPS TOWARD POLITICAL INTEGRATION	98
1. Hostile Coexistence	100
2. Neutral Coexistence	101
3. Detente	102
4. Confederation	104
5. Commonwealth	109
6. Federation	111
7. Unitary Government	111
B. OTHER ALTERNATIVES	113
1. Subversion of South Korea	113
2. Unification by Force	115
VI. KOREAN UNIFICATION AND US INTERESTS	119
A. REGIONAL EFFECTS OF REUNIFICATION	120
1. Russia	121
2. China	122
3. Japan	124
B. REDEFINING THE US-KOREA RELATIONSHIP	126
1. Exclusive Alliance	127
2. Collective Security	129

3. Korean Neutrality	130
4. Independent Nationalism	131
C. US REGIONAL SECURITY RELATIONS	132
VII. CONCLUSION	140
INITIAL DISTRIBUTION LIST	143

I. INTRODUCTION

Korea's political division is the core of its prominence in world affairs as one of the last remnants of a larger political conflict. After more than a generation of subjugation under the repressive Japanese empire, the Korean nation emerged in the late 1940s as two countries with opposed doctrines, both of which developed along the ideological lines of their conflicting Cold War benefactors. As long as the existence of two rival Koreas continues, the peninsula will continue to serve as a symbol of lingering global Cold War tensions.

The collapse of the Soviet Union has, for the most part, ended the five decades long Cold War waged between the forces of democracy and the forces of communism. A new world has emerged wherein bipolar alignment is no longer necessary and nations are free to pursue their own destinies unhampered by the ideologies of their benefactors. The result of this freedom is often violent expressions of nationalism, however, it remains the demonstration of a people's choice to create nations based on common ethnic and cultural ties. Unfortunately, similar expressions are denied to the divided people of the Korean peninsula who continue to suffer the effects of the Cold War conflict.

The political division of the Korean peninsula contradicts the nature of the unified nation that existed for nearly 13 centuries prior to 1945. At the time of Korea's unification in 668 under the Silla rulers, the essential characteristics of nationhood - political unity, common language, ethnic homogeneity, well-recognized international boundaries - were already in place.¹ Korea's cultural development paralleled that of China, primarily due to Silla's close ties to the T'ang dynasty rulers. While these close ties ensured a degree of security for Korea, they also committed Korea to a relatively minor role in the shaping of events in the region.

Korea's importance to its powerful neighbors - China, Russia, and Japan - is due to the strategic geopolitical location of the Korean peninsula. In the thirteenth and sixteenth centuries, Korea served as the invasion route between China and Japan. A rebellion within Korea led to the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and an attempt by the two powers to gain hegemony in the peninsula. Similarly, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 was the result of competition over Korea and brought further destruction to an already weakened country. Russian and Japanese troops fought again during the final days of World War II in the northern part of Korea. Finally, between 1950 and 1953 nineteen nations participated in the Korean War which resulted in the political division that exists today.²

The reunification of the peninsula remains an important priority for all Koreans, both to the leaders of the North:

The Korean people do not want to remain split and nothing can break the desire and will of the Korean people for the reunification of their country.³

and the leaders of the South:

Nothing is more culturally important than the past and the unity of 13 centuries. For Koreans, the past unlocks the future.⁴

The 13 December 1991 signing of a treaty of reconciliation and nonaggression by the leaders of North and South Korea has raised hopes that peaceful reunification of the two Koreas is possible. Changes in US policy, such as the reduction of US forces in South Korea⁵ and the withdrawal of US nuclear weapons,⁶ have been implemented in an attempt to further reduce tensions and contribute to an environment more conducive to peaceful negotiations. However, the range of reunification scenarios stretches from the nightmare of dangerous nationalistic expansion and nuclear conflict to the dream of peaceful reunification and stability.⁷

The core argument of this thesis is that it is in the best interest of the United States to work toward reducing tensions with both Koreas in order to have input in the reunification process and to influence an outcome most favorable to US interests in the region. This thesis will examine the division of Korea and the evolution of reunification policy throughout the various administrations of the Korean government. This examination will lay the groundwork for a

assessment of the particular issues (political, military, economic) involved in an actual reunification attempt as well as the reunification options available. Finally, the specific role of, and effects on, the United States will be reviewed in an attempt to determine how the reunification of Korea can be best used to the benefit of the United States.

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5. Department of Defense, Report to Congress, A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Looking Toward the 21st Century (28 February 1991), (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1991), 4.
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II. THE DIVISION OF KOREA

A. JAPANESE OCCUPATION

Korea's political separation was the result not of a single event but a series of events that began in the sixteenth century and culminated in the current division. In 1592, Japan's Hideyoshi Toyotomi, in pursuit of new worlds to conquer, embarked upon a plan to invade China by using the Korean peninsula as his invasion route. When Korea refused to join him in his attempt or to give him free passage, Hideyoshi sent a force of 160,000 men against it. China eventually responded to this attack on its tributary state but not until after Japanese forces had spread out over nearly the entire country. The ensuing battles and negotiations continued until 1598 when the Japanese finally withdrew from the peninsula.¹

During those six years, great cultural treasures and monuments were destroyed, the central government was weakened, agricultural production declined, and the tax system was totally disrupted. Korea remained mired in broken-down political and social institutions, while its leadership, in the esteemed Confucian tradition, continued to look backward to the political and social models of Chinese antiquity. In 1606, Japan's Tokugawa family restored friendly relations with Korea but the Yi dynasty was never able to fully recover from

the invasions that had totally disrupted its society and government.

In 1868, the Meiji restoration began a period of modernization and political change for Japan. The new government in Tokyo attempted to renegotiate treaties made with Korea in 1606, but Korea rebuffed these attempts and refused to even recognize the new government. Nevertheless, although Japan's political position in Korea was weak, its economic position steadily grew until by 1894, 90% of Korea's foreign trade was with Japan. The importance of the economic relationship, as well as Japan's growing concern over Russia and China, contributed to the Japanese belief that Korea must be independent of China's influence or even controlled by Japan if the Japanese empire were to remain secure. Consequently, Japan continued to make efforts to open up Korea for trade purposes as well as to assist in reforming and modernizing Korea for its own purposes.²

Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) forced China to recognize Korean independence, and to give up its claim of suzerainty over Korea. In 1904, Russia advanced into Manchuria in a quest for ice-free ports with the control of Korea as one of its specific objectives. Japan was victorious in the ensuing Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and Russia, under the terms of the Treaty of Portsmouth, was forced to recognize the political, military, and economic interests of Japan in Korea.

In 1905, after the defeat of Russia, Ito Hirobumi, backed by Japanese troops, secured a convention making Korea a Japanese protectorate. Even though Korea's new status was recognized internationally, the Korean emperor persisted in the belief that the United States would come to his country's rescue because of the "good offices" clause in the Korean-American treaty of 1882. US officials, however, felt Korea had no grounds to call on the "good offices" clause because of the Japanese-Korean agreements which had turned Korea into a Japanese protectorate.³

Ito, as the resident-general, initially planned a benevolent and modernizing administration. This was intended to win Korean collaboration and good will while making Japan's dominance secure. However, in 1907, the Korean emperor sent a secret delegation to the Hague Peace Conference to make the powers aware of the violation of Korean rights by the Japanese. None of the world powers were interested enough to contest Japan's claims and the Korean delegation was turned away without being heard. When the Japanese became aware of this venture, the Korean emperor was forced to abdicate his throne to his more malleable son with whom a new agreement was arranged giving the Japanese resident-general regent-like powers. This agreement also allowed for all matters of internal administration and foreign relations to be controlled by the resident-general. In his new role as "regent," Ito

arranged for Japanese to serve as officials in the Korean government and disbanded the Korean army.⁴

On 26 October 1909, Ito was assassinated by a Korean nationalist. While Ito's death had no serious effect on Japanese public opinion or government policy, many in Korea feared the Japanese government's reaction. In an effort to preempt retaliatory action, the Ilchinhoe, a pro-Japanese organization, submitted a memorial to the Korean throne and a petition to the resident-general proposing Korea's absorption by Japan.

When news of this proposal reached the Korean people, they responded with mass rallies in Seoul to protest the action. However, the annexation had already been planned by the Japanese government and the rallies only served as an indicator of the Korean people's objection to the proposal. To prevent any serious uprisings or violent actions, General Terauchi Masatake, Japan's minister of war and resident-general of Korea, ordered a complete transfer of police powers from the Korean government and placed the police force under direct command of the Japanese Army. An annexation treaty was signed on 22 August 1910, and formally made public seven days later.⁵

Japanese authorities anticipated continued Korean opposition to their rule and reasoned that a military government would be the best way to deal with it. The expansionist Japanese administration initiated many projects

in preparation for continued exploitation of the country. Japan's clashes with China over Manchuria led to even greater changes within Korean society. The increasing military needs of Japan led them to put additional demands on Korean industry. Japan's war mobilization caused Korea's transportation and communications to take on a military character.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, expanded efforts were made to transform Koreans into Japanese subjects. Koreans were prohibited from any communications indicating that Koreans were different historically, culturally, or racially from the Japanese. Korean children were taught Japanese history as their own, forced to adopt Japanese-style names, and forced to practice Shintoism. Beginning in October 1937, Korean elementary school students were required every morning to recite the "oath of imperial Japanese subjects":

We are subjects of the empire of Greater Japan. We unite our hearts in striving to give loyalty and service to the emperor. We will learn to endure hardships and be strong upright citizens.⁷

The use of the Korean language in the schools was forbidden, and Korean newspapers were abolished.

By 1941, there were 60,000 Japanese civil and military police in Korea, one for every 400 Korean citizens. As was true of Japan itself, the system of power was highly centralized and answerable to Tokyo. All important administration positions went to the Japanese, and, with rare

exceptions, only clerical and minor positions were held by Koreans. The development of a Korean political infrastructure was suppressed.⁸ The combined effect of this system resulted in a helplessly unorganized population.

B. KOREAN NATIONALISM

After the end of World War I, President Woodrow Wilson proclaimed his doctrine of national self-determination which appealed to and inspired many oppressed peoples throughout the world, not the least of which were the Korean people. In spite of the severe rule of the Japanese military administration and suppression of resistance, opposition to Japanese rule began to grow. A movement for independence began outside the country, led by Koreans living abroad, and eventually spread to the people in Korea.

In January 1919, Yi T'ae-wang, the former ruler of Korea and a symbol of the Yi Dynasty, died amid rumors that he had been poisoned by the Japanese.⁹ Yi's death inspired the independence movement to take some kind of action. A Declaration of Independence was drawn up and signed by 32 leaders of the Protestant, Ch'ondogyo, and Buddhist religious communities.¹⁰ The proclamation was not aimed at initiating violence of any type but stated only that Korea hoped to gain independence with the help of the powerful nations of the world and to appeal to those foreign nations' consciences. The leaders of the independence movement believed that through

the good will of foreign nations independence could be gained.¹¹

The public announcement of the proclamation was made on March 1, 1919. The leaders of the movement were arrested immediately but a mass protest had already begun. The Japanese interpreted the use of such a large mass demonstration to be not just an expression of dissatisfaction but as actual rebellion against their government. The Japanese military police responded by firing upon the demonstrators and requested additional support from the army and navy. Throughout the nation people joined the movement and took part in the mass parades. It is estimated that over two million people were actively involved in 1,500 demonstrations. When order was reestablished, it was determined that 7,509 people had been killed and 15,961 wounded. 715 private houses, 47 churches, and two school buildings were destroyed by fire. 46,948 Koreans were arrested, of whom 10,441 including 186 women, were tried and convicted for their involvement in the demonstrations.¹²

In spite of the popular support for the movement there was no centralized organization to support it and the movement resulted in, at best, an expression of dissatisfaction with Japanese rule. The expected assistance from the great powers of the world did not materialize. The Korean drive for independence persisted in subsequent years but steadily decreased in its momentum as a popular movement. Later the

exiled leaders of the movement gathered in Shanghai and elected Syngman Rhee as president of the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea.¹³

The March First movement failed in its attempt to gain independence and provoked years of Japanese reprisals. However, it generated a tremendous nationalistic feeling among the Korean people and gave Korean nationalists their Bastille Day.¹⁴ The nationalist movement died down for a while but then gradually emerged in a new form. The new movement was different in that, instead of being simply a demonstration for national independence, it developed into a movement associated with socialism and class struggle. The new movement found its main supporters among workers, farmers, students, and intellectuals, and was characterized by labor disputes, student organizations, ideological campaigns, and incidents involving the Communist Party.

After the failure of the March First movement, some of the Korean nationalists in Shanghai became dissatisfied with the old movement and approached the Russian Communist Party. In 1920 they established a Korean Communist Party in Shanghai which opposed Syngman Rhee's Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea.¹⁵ Large numbers of Koreans received communist military and political training. The trend toward socialist and communist thought spread among the younger generation of Koreans and eventually became more powerful than the nationalists. Student associations active in promoting

socialist and communist ideas were formed by Korean students in Tokyo. Shanghai and Tokyo became the two main centers for the ideological movements of Koreans. Revolutionary ideas were introduced into Korea from these two centers until 1925 when the Korean Communist Party was established in Korea itself.¹⁶

While Korean political activities were continued outside Korea by such groups as Rhee's Provisional Government and Kim Ku's United Association of Movements for the Revival of Korea, the Korean communist groups became active with the Chinese communist groups in the armed contingents fighting against Japan. The majority of Koreans living outside of Korea were in Manchuria and, consequently, had numerous grievances of a socio-economic nature against the Japanese as well as very strong anti-Japanese feelings in general. Ties that had been previously established with the Chinese communists made it almost inevitable that Koreans would constitute an important element of the guerilla forces and created an environment for the emergence of Kim Il Sung as the future leader of North Korea.

Although details of Kim's life are subject to controversy, he is believed to have led the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army. This unit consisted of 150-300 men and was based on support from Koreans in Manchuria.¹⁷ In June 1937, Kim Il Sung reportedly led a successful raid against the Japanese on the Sino-Korean border town of Pojon. Although the censored

press prevented reporting of other guerilla exploits, this raid received considerable attention and encouraged nationalistic feeling among Koreans everywhere. This type of activity led to the creation of a folk hero image of Kim and made the movement very popular to those Koreans unable to carry on the fight themselves.¹⁸

By February 1941, the advancing Japanese forced Kim to retreat to Siberia where he came into contact with Soviet leaders. This early contact allowed the Soviet command ample time to listen to Kim's reports and evaluate him. The result was the eventual selection of Kim Il Sung by the Soviet command to be the leader of North Korea.

With the defeat of the Japanese in 1945 came the collapse of Korea's social, economic, and political machinery. The Japanese had monopolized the higher level administration positions and Korean overt political activity had been completely suppressed. Consequently, the lack of organized authority resulted in political chaos. To fill the void, organizations of nearly every political ideology sprang up throughout the country. The turmoil was tempered somewhat by the common goals that were shared by these groups. They saw the necessity to establish as quickly as possible a unified political authority; to restore political, economic, social and cultural institutions; and to build an independent nation for the people. Consequently, the Korean people formed the Committee for the Preparation of Korean Independence and under

it the Korean People's Republic was born on 6 September 1945.¹⁹

In spite of the initial show of unification, no unifying political party or individual developed and the numerous factions that had formed fought one another for power. When Syngman Rhee, Kim Ku, and other respected people returned to Korea, the Korean public anticipated one of these men unifying the factions. Instead their return deepened the rift between the communists and the nationalists, and in February 1946, the Korean People's Republic was dissolved.

Korea's internal conditions were not all that frustrated the consolidation of the country. Korea was once again occupied by foreign troops. Russia had declared war against Japan on 8 August 1945, and crossed the frontier into northern Korea. Approximately one month later, the United States sent troops into southern Korea and announced the formation of a military government. As the common enemies of the United States and the Soviet Union disappeared, so too did the alliance that had existed during the war. Soon the two nations came into direct conflict over Korea.

C. US-USSR OCCUPATION

The Russian entry into northern Korea precluded a surrender of the Japanese to the United States alone. The War Department planners who were preparing the draft for the surrender of Japanese forces in Korea apparently were aware of

the close proximity of the Russians at the time of their drafting and recommended the 38th parallel as the division line for acceptance of Japanese troops.²⁰

The division was more than just an administrative convenience. US political objectives for a division at the 38th parallel were: to prevent occupation of all of Korea by Soviet forces; to put the United States in as strong a position as possible to implement the promise of a free Korea; to provide for the security of Japan and US forces during the US occupation of Japan; and to limit the area of communist control.²¹ When US forces entered Korea on 8 September 1945, MacArthur assumed government powers in the South. In response, the Soviets assumed control in the North.

Concerns about keeping Korea free from communist control made US authorities hesitant to rely on any already established political organizations. Occupation policy was that the People's Republic of Korea was a front for Communist activity and that Korean political development had to be guided along lines consistent with American concepts of free representative democracy.

During the early days of the occupation, Lieutenant General John R. Hodges, the United States Commander, proposed to begin the unification of the peninsula by relaxing travel restrictions between the two zones and unifying Korea's economy and administration. Colonel General Ivan Chistiakov, Hodges' counterpart in the Soviet zone, chose not to respond

to these overtures. As a result, Hodges recommended that the unification of Korea be considered at a higher level. The matter was placed on the agenda of the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow in December.²²

The Moscow Agreement of December 1945, accepted by China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States, established the following guidelines to assist in handling the Korea situation:

1. With a view to the reestablishment of Korea as an independent state, the creation of conditions for developing the country on democratic principles and the earliest possible liquidation of the disastrous results of the protracted Japanese domination in Korea, there shall be set up a provisional Korean democratic government, which shall take all the necessary steps for developing the industry, transport, and agriculture of Korea and the national culture of the Korean people.
2. In order to assist the formation of a provisional Korean government and with a view to the preliminary elaboration of the appropriate measures, there shall be established a Joint Commission consisting of representatives of the United States command in southern Korea and the Soviet command in northern Korea. In preparing their proposals the Commission shall consult with the Korean democratic parties and social organizations. The recommendations worked out by the Commission shall be presented for the consideration of the Governments of Soviet Socialist Republics, China, the United Kingdom, and the United States prior to final decision by the two Governments represented on the Joint Commission.
3. It shall be the task of the Joint Commission, with the participation of the provisional Korean democratic government and of the Korean democratic organizations to work out measures also for helping and assisting (trusteeship) the political, economic, and social progress of the Korean people, the development of democratic self-government, and the establishment of the national independence of Korea.²³

The Moscow Agreement was met with unfavorable reactions from the Korean people in general and the nationalist groups in particular. With the Japanese occupation still fresh in their memories, most Koreans interpreted trusteeship to mean a protectorate, with annexation as the final outcome. All political groups, North and South, were in favor of immediate independence and protested as such. Orders from North Korea, however, instructed all loyal communists to support the trusteeship and the communist and associated groups soon fell into line with the official Soviet position.²⁴ The nationalist groups continued to resist the authority of the occupation forces without restraint from the United States authorities. As a result, by the time the Commission met, communist and left-wing opposition to the trusteeship proposal had been suppressed while the nationalist and conservative groups remained openly resistant to the idea.

As the terms of the Moscow agreement were implemented, the Soviet delegation insisted the only Korean groups and organizations that should be consulted were those that were in full accordance with the Moscow Agreement. The US delegation argued that the groups expressing their opposition to trusteeship were exercising the right of free speech and should not be barred from consultation because of that. After attempts at compromise were made and rejected, the US delegation refused to accept the Soviet proposal and the Commission was adjourned.

On 12 June 1946, the Joint Commission met again and issued a communique outlining the agreed method of consultation. Applications for participation in the consultations were received from the various groups, and preliminary meetings of the applicants were held. 39 political parties and 386 social organizations applied in the American zone, claiming a total membership of 52,000,000, submitted applications. In the Soviet zone, three political parties and 35 social organizations, claiming 13,300,000 members, applied. The number of applications submitted indicated a great deal of overlapping membership and exaggeration. In the South, the conservative parties and organizations claimed roughly 25,000,000 members, and the moderates and leftists about 13,500,000 each. In the Soviet zone, the only applicants allowed were the members of communist-controlled Democratic Front.²⁵

Early in July another disagreement developed over the provisions for oral consultations. The Soviet delegation objected to the involvement of any individuals or groups who were members of the Anti-Trusteeship Committee, formed in December 1945 by conservative and nationalist party leaders to block the work of the Joint Commission. Though the Committee's membership represented the largest anti-Communist group in South Korea, its opposition to the Moscow Agreement was a source of embarrassment to the United States delegation and an obstacle to agreement in the Joint Commission.

US-USSR relations deteriorated further when the Soviet Consul in Seoul was expelled in retaliation for the Russian refusal to permit establishment of an American consulate in Pyongyang. This put an end to any serious effort by the United States and the Soviet Union to solve the problem with Korea and, along with the failure of the Joint Commission, led to the realization that prolonged military government had become inevitable.²⁶

In August, the Soviet delegation proposed that the Commission appoint a Korean provisional national assembly, composed of representatives from consultative groups. A month later, it proposed the withdrawal of American and Soviet occupation forces by 1 January 1948, to allow the Korean people to conduct their own elections. By this time, the decayed state of US-USSR relations had led the Soviet Union to attempt to stabilize the political, economic, and social situations of North Korea to its own advantage, primarily by eliminating the hostile groups from their respective zones. The United States had responded in similar fashion and, as a result, both Soviet proposals were rejected by the West.

The United States Military Government was unsuccessful in satisfying any of the important groups or organizations in Korea. The need to move troops quickly to Korea after the Soviet entry resulted in almost no time for advanced planning or preparation. Having little language capability, Occupation forces inclined toward the landed gentry and conservatives who

made up the majority of English-speaking Koreans.²⁷ The United States was also forced to lean politically toward the nationalist and conservative organizations because of the leftist groups' support of the People's Republic, believed to be communist-controlled. However, these conservative elements continued to be an embarrassment to the United States because of their resistance to the Moscow Agreement, their opposition to reform measures and democratic procedures, and their demands for immediate and complete independence.²⁸

The difficulty the United States had in reaching some type of agreement with the Soviet Union was exacerbated by the view that Korea was of little strategic interest to the United States. The Truman Doctrine focused US economic resources and military strength in Europe, the area considered the most threatened by the expansionist Soviet threat. Asia was secondary to the European theater and the Chinese Communist Party's victory was considered as simply a result of internal Chinese forces that the United States had tried unsuccessfully to influence.²⁹ When applied to Asia, the Truman Doctrine resulted in a "selective policy of solidifying US political and military presence in Japan, while undertaking gradual military disengagement from the East Asian continent."³⁰

The National Security Council's assessment was that the United States had "little strategic interest in maintaining its present troops and bases in Korea."³¹ President Harry Truman endorsed this assessment as did General Douglas

MacArthur, who did not view Korea as important to the defense of Japan. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) considered South Korea indefensible and thus a strategic liability for the United States.³²

The advantages of maintaining US forces on the peninsula were far outweighed by the liabilities. By 1947 the United States was in the position of trying to withdraw from an unfortunate circumstance without giving in to the pressures of Communism. In an attempt to extricate themselves from their predicament, US authorities brought the question before the United Nations General Assembly.³³

D. UNITED NATIONS INTERVENTION

On 17 October 1947, the United States sent a draft-resolution to the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The draft proposed the re-establishment of national independence for Korea and the withdrawal of all occupying forces as early as practically possible. To accomplish this the occupying powers were to hold elections in their respective zones by 31 March 1948 under the observation of a United Nations Commission, after which a National Assembly and a National Government would be created. The new government would then establish its own security forces, and occupation forces would be withdrawn in accordance with an agreement between the National Government and the occupying powers.³⁴

The Soviet delegation subsequently submitted two draft resolutions. The first was a restatement of their original proposal which recommended allowing the Korean people to establish a government of their own choosing after the occupation troops were simultaneously withdrawn. This proposal was received favorably in South Korea where the Korean people were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the US military government. The second proposal was to allow elected representatives from Northern and Southern Korea to participate in the discussion of the question.

The Soviet proposal for the immediate withdrawal of occupation forces was rejected by the West which viewed it as a step toward the establishment of a communist-controlled government. The US view was that immediate withdrawal of forces would lead to disunity and chaos and that the superior organization and discipline of the communists would enable them to take full advantage of the resulting confusion. The Soviets argued that free elections would not be possible until all occupation troops were withdrawn.

After some consideration, the General Assembly adopted the US version. The Soviet Union, already viewing the Assembly as a tool of US imperialism, found this decision completely unacceptable. First, Korean representatives would not be participants in the initial consideration of the Korean question when basic proposals were being drafted. Secondly, supervision of elections by the United Nations would call into

question the free character of earlier elections in the Soviet zone. After the rejection of the Soviet proposal, the Soviet authorities refused to take part in the work of the commission unless representatives of the Korean people participated in the discussion.³⁵

The General Assembly established a deadline of 31 March 1948 for elections to be held. Representatives of the Korean people were to be elected to participate in the General Assembly's future consideration of the Korean question. These representatives were also to constitute a National Assembly with the authority to establish a National Government. The National Government would then organize its own security forces, assume control of government functions from the military commands, and arrange with "the occupying Powers" for the complete withdrawal of their armed forces, within ninety days if possible.³⁶

The Commission attempted to notify the occupation authorities in the North of its decision but was unable to make contact with the Soviet Military Command or to enter the Soviet zone of occupation. The Soviet military authorities, having already expressed their government's view and been rejected, had no authority to recognize the legitimacy of the Commission. Any further proposals to achieve the independence of Korea by the holding of elections and the establishment of a national government would have to be considered by direct negotiations between the two governments.³⁷

Since the Commission was unable to carry out the Assembly's program, it was forced to consult the political leaders in the South to determine whether or not to proceed with elections. Once again the nationalist groups, now political parties, were in disagreement. The rightist groups, with the exception of Kim Koo's Korean Independence Party, were strongly in favor of immediate elections regardless of what happened in the North. The moderate and leftist groups were strongly opposed to holding elections in South Korea alone. Following the Soviet line of thinking, they argued that elections could not now be held in a free atmosphere and a unified Korea would be more difficult to obtain. Nevertheless, elections were held in South Korea. On 31 May 1948, the elected representatives met in Seoul as the Korean National Assembly, and elected Dr. Syngman Rhee as chairman. The Republic of Korea was established on 15 August 1948, the third anniversary of liberation from Japan.³⁸

Once the decision was made to hold elections in South Korea alone and to set up a Korean government there, the Soviet authorities began creating their own version of a Korean National Government. A new constitution had been published by the Korean People's Committee on 1 May 1948. Early in July the North Korean regime announced that elections would be held on 25 August for a Supreme People's Assembly of 572 members. On 3 September, after being in session one day, the Supreme People's Assembly ratified the 1 May constitution.

On 9 September 1948, the North Korean regime proclaimed itself a Democratic People's Republic under the leadership of Kim Il Sung.³⁹

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III. REUNIFICATION POLICIES

Since the separation of the Korean peninsula into two camps of conflicting ideologies, repeated efforts have been made, and rejected, in an attempt to unify the country. The dilemma of these many failed attempts at has been most accurately depicted in this description by Hwang In Kwan:

The problems of the current Korean impasse in its reunification efforts is analogous to the dual key system which is used to control the launch of nuclear missiles; that is, nothing happens unless both operators agree to turn their keys simultaneously.¹

While such a analogy might seem ominous in light of North Korea's reported nuclear weapons development, it is nonetheless an accurate reflection of the inter-Korean relationship. With the exception of the 4 July 1972 joint communique, unification proposals have been made unilaterally without previous consultation by one Korea with the other. This style of "negotiation" has resulted in the formulation of reunification proposals for their propaganda potential rather than their reunification potential.

These previous reunification attempts, however unsuccessful, reflected the policies and beliefs of the administrations within which they were formulated. By examining these previous efforts the specific reasons for failure become evident and provide a better understanding of

the North-South antagonism that perpetuates the division of Korea.

A. 1948-1960 (SYNGMAN RHEE)

The establishment of the Republic of Korea was opposed by many factions within the South who saw the creation of a separate state as a further barrier to reunification.² Consequently, the fledgling Syngman Rhee government was forced to make stabilization of its own national foundation its first priority. The North Korean regime had already been solidified under Soviet tutelage which allowed the Kim government to devote its efforts to building up its military might for a future attempt at reunification by force. This inward focus of both countries left any serious attempt at a peacefully negotiated reunification in the hands of the United Nations.

The South Korean idea of reunification was based on the premise that the ROK was the only lawful and legitimate national government in Korea, having been created under the auspices of the United Nations and sanctioned by a fair election. On 12 September 1948, the ROK National Assembly adopted a resolution that reflected this view and offered guidance to the North:

We hope you, our fellow countrymen in north Korea, will hold a general election soon in a free atmosphere, in accordance with the United Nations resolution, as we did, and elect the true representatives of the people, sending them to the National Assembly.³

The resolution reserved 100 seats in the National Assembly for the duly elected (under UN observation) North Korean representatives. Thus, as far as the South was concerned, the foundation for reunification had been laid.

The North took an entirely different view of the issue and adopted as its reunification policy the overthrow of the South Korean government by force. A series of communist-led armed revolts in the South began in October 1948 and encouraged the North Korean regime to intensify its efforts in this direction. While it was unclear whether the revolts were directed by the North or initiated by the South Korean communists themselves, the atrocities committed by these groups shocked the majority of South Koreans and led to the passing of the National Security Law which outlawed communism and contained provisions for prosecuting communists. The United States, having already decided to withdraw its troops from South Korea, supported any action that would effectively suppress the revolts. Consequently, anti-communism became the official ideology of the ROK. While this frustrated the North's ambition to take over South Korea by subversive means, the North Korean regime never abandoned hope for the military unification of Korea and increased the tempo of its military and industrial development accordingly.⁴

American policy-makers had ruled out the use of US armed forces as a means to ensure South Korea's political independence and territorial integrity. They concluded this

option carried an unacceptable risk of involving the United States in a major war in an area in which "all of the natural advantages would accrue to the Soviets."⁵ By June 1949, the 500-man Military Advisory Group in Korea (KMAG) was all that remained of US troops in Korea. The risk of a communist takeover was to be minimized by using KMAG to train the expanded ROK Army (from 65,000 in March 1949 to 98,000 in June 1950) after the US withdrawal. The ROK Army was to be supplied with about \$200 million in military equipment, with more military aid promised.⁶

Rhee's requests for immediate aid were repeatedly denied by Washington, even though US intelligence efforts had observed a substantial military buildup in North Korea. These requests were denied for three major reasons: (1) the consensus concerning Korea's low priority in US strategic planning; (2) Rhee's repeated public pledge to invade North Korea; and (3) the depletion of US military stockpiles.⁷ The lack of stockpiles delayed the delivery of \$11 million in military aid promised under the Military Assistance Program for fiscal year 1950. By June 1950, less than \$1000 worth of the military equipment pledged had reached South Korea.⁸

On 25 June 1950, North Korean forces attacked in force along the length of the 38th parallel. While the North's stated reason for the attack was to repulse a South Korean provocation, it soon became apparent that the North was attempting to unite the peninsula by force. The ROK

government immediately protested to the United Nations Commission on Korea in Seoul and asked the US government for military support.

Although the United States had previously determined Korea to be of little intrinsic value, the North Korean attack forced a reevaluation of policy. The previous loss of the US nuclear monopoly, "loss" of China to communism, and the Sino-Soviet Treaty, all contributed to the US feeling that communism was an expansionist force that must be contained and forced US leadership to see that the aggression of North Korea had its roots in past US failure to draw the line against the Soviet Union. John Foster Dulles warned that "to sit by while Korea is overrun by unprovoked armed attack would start a disastrous chain of events leading most probably to world war."⁹

The speed of the North Korean attack and the unpreparedness of the South ensured DPRK forces of quick success. Within three days North Korean forces captured Seoul and announced that the final victory of the people had been achieved. Kim's armies continued their drive south eventually pinning down US and ROK troops near the city of Pusan in the southeast of the peninsula.

General Douglas MacArthur assumed command of UN forces on 14 July 1950 and led a surprise landing at Inchon that pushed the communists out of South Korea. MacArthur's advance to the Yalu was halted when "volunteer" forces from the People's

Republic of China entered the war on the side of the North in October 1950. The combined communist forces drove their opposing forces south once again and recaptured Seoul on 4 January 1951. The UN forces regrouped and mounted a counterattack which re-took Seoul on 12 March 1951. A front was finally established near the original division at the 38th parallel. Over the objections of both Koreas, UN forces agreed to a Russian proposed ceasefire. Truce negotiations began at Kaesong in July 1951.

On 27 July 1953, after more than two years of negotiations, an Armistice Agreement was signed at Panmunjom. South Korean President Syngman Rhee refused to enter into the agreement, consequently, the United States signed for the allied forces. The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) replaced the 38th parallel as the boundary between North Korea and South Korea and the Military Armistice Commission (MAC) was set up to hear complaints about violations of the armistice across the DMZ.

The Korean War left South Korea's political process as devastated as were the South Korean people.

The Korean War and the bitter experience under communism of many South Koreans during the war, deprived leftist movements in the South of legitimacy, effectiveness, and even legality. Furthermore, South Korea lost many of her leaders of moderate political persuasion during the Korean War, because they chose not to leave Seoul during communist occupation of the city and were subsequently taken to the North by the communists. In this way the Korean War served to liquidate a large number of leftists and their supporters who failed to leave the South with the communist forces during their retreat.¹⁰

As a result, South Korea was deprived of those "centrist" political leaders who might have led a progressive political movement.

Rhee used the war to enhance his political power and strengthen his hold on the government by eliminating the remaining leftist groups and creating ideological conformity.¹¹ He also persisted in threats to unify Korea by force, maintaining that "it is no war of aggression to liberate a part of our own soil."¹² However, his threats of forced liberation were eventually rendered impotent by the signing of the US-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty on 8 August 1953.

The Mutual Defense Treaty set forth the key conditions governing future US-ROK security cooperation. The UN Command of Korea remained under the control of the US military as was the representation at MAC meetings in Panmunjom. Since Rhee had refused to sign the Armistice Agreement, the ROK had only an observer role at subsequent MAC meetings.¹³ Between 1953 and 1960, US forces in South Korea were reduced from 360,000 to 60,000 personnel while US advisors, military aid, and supplies strengthened the Republic of Korea armed forces.¹⁴

The Armistice Agreement required a political conference to be held within three months of the signing, however, it was not until the Berlin Conference of February 1954 that such arrangements were made.¹⁵ The resulting Geneva conference opened on 26 April 1954 with South Korea and 16 UN members who had sent troops to Korea (minus South Africa) on one side and

North Korea, the People's Republic of China, and the Soviet Union on the other side.¹⁶

The debate at the Geneva conference centered around three main issues: (1) the authority and competence of the UN in dealing with the Korean question; (2) the holding of genuinely free Korean elections with proportionate representation for north and south Korea; and (3) the retention of UN forces in Korea until the creation of a unified, independent and democratic Korea had been accomplished. These were the basic principles that the UN considered essential and had stressed since 1947.¹⁷

The seeming futility of the conference was made manifest by Rhee's statements throughout the process. Rhee made it clear that he expected the conference to be unsuccessful:

We hope, therefore, that if and when the Geneva conference has failed, the United States and our other friends in the free world will join with us in employing other means to drive the enemy from our land.¹⁸

It is clear that Rhee persisted in his desire to march North and was not fully supportive of a negotiated reunification.

The first major confrontation of the conference was over the issue of elections. The South Korean delegation proposed elections be held in North Korea only, stressing that elections had already taken place in South Korea to the satisfaction of the United Nations. This would have ensured that the surviving members of the South Korean Parliament would keep their jobs with Rhee becoming head of the unified

government.¹⁹ The communists emphatically rejected the principle of elections in North Korea only and proposed instead all-Korean elections under the supervision of a commission composed of representatives chosen by the two parliaments. The Western powers rejected the North Korean proposal, having seen the results of such coalition governments in Czechoslovakia and other Central European countries now under communist control.²⁰

On 22 May 1954, ROK Foreign Minister Pyun Yung Tai presented a comprehensive fourteen-point proposal for the unification of Korea that included the holding of free elections in both North and South Korea. Pyun's proposal, however, maintained a predominant role for the UN in supervising the elections, determining the proportionate representation for a new National Assembly, and certifying the unified Korean government.²¹ The communists rejected any role whatsoever for the United Nations in a Korean settlement.

Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov charged that the United Nations itself had been a belligerent in the Korean war, that the UN resolutions on Korea in 1950 lacked validity, that UN supervision in Korea would constitute "foreign intervention," and that the Geneva Conference had nothing to do with the United Nations. This uncompromising rejection of the authority and competence of the United Nations was reiterated by the PRC and DPRK representatives who categorically rejected Pyun's fourteen-point proposal,

objecting specifically to granting the United Nations a role in supervising the all-Korean elections.²²

The communists proposed that a neutral nations supervisory commission be established to observe all-Korean elections. This commission was to have consisted of an equal number of communist and non-communist governments and function only on the basis of "mutual agreement." This arrangement would have permitted the North Korean delegates, representing an undemocratic regime exercising control over less than one third of the Korean population, to veto decisions of the non-communist majority.²³

On 15 June 1954, after nearly two months of discussion and debate there was no indication that the communist side had any sincere intention of seeking to resolve the differences on the two main issues of the authority of the United Nations and the principle of free elections. Therefore a "Declaration by the Sixteen," signed by the allied delegations, was introduced which restated the principles they had consistently supported at the Conference, pointing out that the communist delegations had refused to accept these principles and were persisting in the same attitudes which had impeded UN efforts to reunify Korea since 1947. Because of the communist rejection of the fundamental principles considered indispensable by the United Nations Allies, the Declaration concluded that "further consideration and examination of the Korean question by the Conference would serve no useful purpose."²⁴

The Geneva conference ended when it became clearly evident that the communist delegations were determined to stand uncompromisingly on positions incompatible with the basic principles of the UN representative powers. Consequently, the conference did little more than confirm the political division of the Korean peninsula.²⁵ The obstinacy of the Rhee government was demonstrated by Pyun's statement that failure of the conference had invalidated the Korean armistice and therefore the South was free to take any action against the "Chinese invaders" in North Korea.²⁶

On 7 March 1955, Kim Il Sung proposed a nonaggression treaty.²⁷ The Republic of Korea rejected this proposal because acceptance would indicate recognition of the two Koreas as sovereign equals, and the South was not ready to deal with the North on any basis. The administration of Syngman Rhee clung to its conviction that the only formula for reunification was a march to the North.

The corruption of the Rhee regime was to prevent his march to the North or any other attempt at reunification. While Rhee's elections in 1952 and 1956 were both rigged to some degree, the 1960 presidential election was blatant in its corruption. Several student groups had focused their efforts on "saving democracy" and pursued this goal with fanatical enthusiasm.²⁸ On 11 April 1960, the body of an opposition student, the victim of police torture, was found floating in the harbor at Masan, a small southeast coast city. Three days

of rioting ensued. On 18 April 1960, a group of students returning from a peaceful demonstration protesting police violence were beaten by gangs recruited by the police chief of the Presidential mansion. As a result, on 19 April 1960, tens of thousands of unarmed students converged on Seoul to protest. The police responded by firing upon the students, killing many and inciting further rioting and demonstrations. Rhee, on the advice of the US embassy, announced his resignation and left Korea on 26 April 1960.²⁹

The North Korean regime tried unsuccessfully to equate the student demonstrations, which were primarily against the rigging of the presidential election, to a struggle of the youth against US imperialists. Immediately after Rhee's resignation, Pyongyang proposed a joint conference of all political parties in the North and South to discuss the establishment of a unified government of Korea.

Although the North Korean propaganda was unsuccessful in generating an anti-American protest, the collapse of the Rhee government gave the North a degree of self-confidence. Rhee's legacy as the first President of the Korean Provisional Government during the Japanese occupation made him the most famous independence leader of Korea. The loss of Rhee meant the loss of the key symbol of the ROK's continuity with the Korean independence movement and gave Kim a valid excuse to offer himself as the only "legitimate" revolutionary in Korea.³⁰

B. 1960-1961 (CHANG MYON)

On 29 July 1960, a national election put the Democratic Party, the former opposition party, into power with an overwhelming majority of seats in the National Assembly. On 3 August 1960, Chang Myon, the former Vice President under Syngman Rhee, was elected Premier. The second republic was born and with it an attempt at liberal democratic government.

While Chang's administration sought to establish a true democratic government, the increased freedom brought with it student uprisings and increased criticism of the government's unification policies. Reformist political parties advocated inter-Korean exchanges and some went so far as to demand the withdrawal of US forces from Korea. Other reformist parties demanded the establishment of a neutral, democratic and unified government based on the spirit of independence and self-reliance. The organization of the Central Council for Independent National Unification was expanded, with some students demanding North-South student talks.⁵¹

On 14 August 1960, Kim once again attempted to capitalize on the instability of the South by presenting the idea of a North-South confederation as a means of achieving peaceful national reunification. Under this confederation system, a Supreme National Committee organized by representatives of the two governments would be established to coordinate cultural and economic development for the whole of Korea. At the same time, both sides would maintain their own political system,

with free and independent activities guaranteed, until the eventual unification of Korea.

Besides the propaganda value, the North sought to use the confederation idea to gain acceptance and the formal recognition of the existence of two sovereign states in the two parts of Korea. In this respect, the DPRK would achieve equal status with the ROK, which had already been recognized by the UN, formalizing the existence of the two sovereign states recognized in international law.³²

This proposal was rejected by the South as another propaganda ploy, both for its introduction at a time of political instability as well as its unilateral issuance. In order not to lose the propaganda edge, the new Chang Myon government announced a change from the previous administration's military unification position, "March north to unify," to a peaceful one through UN-supervised free elections.³³ The unification policy maintained the Rhee characteristics of non-recognition of North Korea as a sovereign nation.

The credibility of the confederal scheme was eroded when the North, taking advantage of the South Korean student demands for a North-South unification conference, established the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland on 13 May 1961. This North Korean propaganda move worsened the South's political instability. The inability, or unwillingness, of the Chang government to use overwhelming

force to maintain order led to further cleavages between various opposing factions.³⁴ On 16 May 1961, a group of military officers staged a revolution and established a military government in the South.

C. 1961-1979 (PARK CHUNG HEE)

The new military administration, headed by Major General Park Chung Hee, announced a revised government platform based on: (1) anti-communism; (2) strong ties with the United States; (3) eradication of all "corruptions and social evils;" (4) the creation of "fresh morale;" (5) and the establishment of "a self-supporting economy."³⁵ The ideas of North-South negotiations and unification under neutrality were outlawed, while the method of general elections in North and South Korea under the United Nations' supervision was adopted as the sole formula of unification.

Under the motto of "construction first, unification later," President Park Chung Hee proclaimed a policy which concentrated on building up the ability to win over communism rather than concentrating on unification. This called for an all-out effort at building national power based on the development of economic power. Any serious attempts at reunification were to be postponed until the South achieved economic, military, political, cultural, and social superiority over the North. Until such superiority was

achieved, further debates on unification were considered unrealistic.³⁶

In reaction to Park's anti-communist policy, North Korea's unification policy was changed from a "peaceful approach" to one promoting an internal communist revolution in the South.³⁷ Kim emphasized his changing attitudes by capitalizing on the neutral approach he had taken to the Sino-Soviet rift and negotiated military alliances with the Soviet Union (1 July 1961) and China (11 July 1961).

In spite of the political turmoil brought on by the Park coup d'etat, the ROK population and economy had continued to grow. While a great boon to the country, this economic growth had spawned serious dissent in the ROK. The Pyongyang government was anxious to capitalize upon this political dissent by creating Vietnamese-style revolutionary conditions in the South. The number of "incidents" that occurred between US/ROK and DPRK forces rose from 59 in 1965 and 50 in 1966, to 566 in 1967 and 629 in 1968.³⁸ These efforts failed to strike a responsive chord in the South, however, and served only to anger and frighten the South Korean public.

North Korea's aggressive attempts at subversion reached a high-water mark on 21 January 1968 when a 31 man commando unit infiltrated the South to assassinate Park and came within several hundred feet of the presidential mansion in Seoul.³⁹ Under questioning, the lone survivor of the abortive attempt, Lieutenant Kim Sin-jo, disclosed that his unit had trained for

two years for this mission and that there were an estimated 2,400 North Korean commandos undergoing special training in North Korea for additional guerilla missions in the South.⁴⁰

Events in the international political arena had an even greater effect on events in Korea. In March 1969, fighting broke out between Russian and Chinese forces along the Ussuri River. This fighting was followed by discreet Soviet inquiries as to what the American response would be if the Kremlin should authorize a pre-emptive attack against Chinese nuclear facilities. Acting in line with Henry Kissinger's theory that it was better to side with the weaker instead of the stronger antagonist in a triangular relationship, President Richard M. Nixon determined that the United States could not allow China to be defeated in a Sino-Soviet war. Nixon adopted a strategy similar to North Korea's in dealing with China and the Soviet Union: "to refrain from tempting either side into retaliation or blackmail by giving the impression that the United States was "using" it against the other."⁴¹ Simultaneously, Nixon took steps to reach Sino-American and Soviet-American detentes.

The improved relations between the United States and the two communist giants reduced the number of US adversaries in the world and led to the announcement of the Nixon Doctrine on 25 July 1969. The Nixon Doctrine insisted that US military involvement in world affairs would be used only to supplement the contributions of friendly nations defending their own

sovereignty where there were ongoing hostilities. While the most obvious manifestation was gradual withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam, the first substantial application of the Nixon Doctrine was in Korea, where 20,000 US troops were withdrawn in the fall of 1970.

The US-USSR detente and the improving Sino-US relations had a spillover effect on the Korean peninsula, effecting a change in the basis of South Korea's policy toward the North. In February 1970, William J. Porter, the American Ambassador to Seoul, testified before Congress that the United States was moving toward opening a dialogue between Seoul and Pyongyang. Washington further encouraged a direct North-South contact and suggested that the two Koreas be admitted simultaneously to the UN General Assembly.⁴²

Faced with the prospects of Sino-American rapprochement and general trends towards a detente in the Far East, the Seoul government began to stress efforts to improve relations with the North. On 15 August 1970, Park declared a new policy which laid out the preconditions for peaceful unification, indicated the policy direction the South would take when those preconditions were met, and proposed a peaceful competition between the South and the North under the premise that the North Koreans renounce their war-provocation policy.⁴³ President Park's declaration was taken to suggest the possibility of a dialogue between the authorities of South and North for the first time in the quarter-century of division.

The changing external environment was a mixed blessing for the North Korean regime. The recognition of two Koreas, direct North-South negotiations, and the withdrawal of US troops from the peninsula were goals the North had been striving for and had not yet given up. Yet the US detentes were seen to be threatening to the DPRK's alliances and a means of isolating the North. On 12 April 1971, Kim proposed an eight-point proposal for peaceful unification, with the confederation plan as a transitional step. By calling for talks at Panmunjom or in a third country "at any time," the North Korean regime put pressure on the South to respond.

An inter-Korean dialogue finally resulted in September 1971. Beginning with a conference of the North and South Red Cross societies, talks soon shifted to high-level officials. The high-point of this series of events was the North-South Joint Communique issued on 4 July 1972 in which the South and the North agreed to promote unification based on the three grand principles of independence, peace, and grand national unity.⁴⁴

This signalled a sweeping change in the unification policy of the South Korean government. First, the North Korean regime was recognized as the other entity in a dialogue or in negotiations. In other words, the idea of "two Koreas" was accepted. Second, direct and peaceful dialogue between the direct parties, South Korea and North Korea, replaced the

previous emphasis on having the United Nations handle the question.⁴⁵

The optimism with which the talks began gave way to frustration as they progressed. Disagreements continued over the issue of free travel between the countries, US forces in the South, and the proposed simultaneous entry of North and South Korea into the UN.⁴⁶ By 10 June 1973 North Korean propaganda resumed and after 12 July 1973 all diplomacy ceased. Over 22 months there had been 58 conferences in which 2,337 members of the press and 1,084 negotiators were involved; 210 news reports and 325 officials crossed the DMZ. A telephone hot line linking Seoul and Pyongyang was the only tangible result.⁴⁷

On 18 January 1974, President Park proposed a nonaggression pact based on the principles of noninterference and the continuation of the armistice.⁴⁸ As the North had made similar propositions since 1963, based on US force withdrawal and mutual troop reduction, Park's failure to include these issues led to a denunciation by Pyongyang two days later.

The reunification policies of the two regimes remained divergent throughout Park's administration. The tendency to use reunification proposals for propaganda and strategic purposes indicated neither government was seriously interested in pursuing peaceful unification. Instead the issue of reunification was used as an opportunity to appease domestic

pressure and world opinion while justifying continued military rule and restrictions on individual liberty on both sides of the DMZ. President Carter, during his visit to Seoul from 29 June-1 July 1979, proposed talks involving the two Koreas and the United States. Both Koreas responded by insisting that the armistice must first become a peace treaty before ROK and DPRK would again have direct discussions.

Any plans for further reunification initiatives in the Park administration were ended with the assassination of President Park on 26 October 1979. The assassin, Kim Chae Kyu, Park's director of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), believed that he himself was the best man for the presidency and that by killing the president and controlling the martial law force he would be able to take control of the government. Military leaders, however, quickly responded to the crisis and maintained control of the ROK government.

Martial law was immediately instituted and placed under the command of General Chong Sung Hwa, general chief of staff of the ROK Army. On 27 October 1979, upon receipt of official orders of President Park's death, General John A. Wickham, commander of the US armed forces in Korea, ordered American troops in Korea into an escalated state of defense readiness condition.⁴⁹ This increased defense posture was seen by the North as a demonstration of US imperialist support for the South's "fascist Yushin system." The North proceeded to use

the opportunity to once again call for the total withdrawal of US forces from South Korea.⁵⁰

The DPRK leadership also capitalized on the situation by expanding their propaganda efforts into a retrospective of the administration of the "heinous, fascist dictator Park," and his characterization as a "brutal butcher and killer." The ROK provisional government's announcement that it would pursue democratic reforms was heavily criticized by the DPRK government which depicted it as a smokescreen for the continuation of Park's Yushin system that would continue "ruthlessly repressing those students and patriotic masses who are demanding a democratic society and independent national reunification."⁵¹ To observers of the situation in Korea there was little in the way of inspiration for future talks on reunification.

D. 1979-1980 (CHOI KYU HA)

With the assassination of Park, Prime Minister Choi Kyu Ha became acting president of the interim government until his own election to the presidency on 6 December 1979.

In spite of Choi's repeated pledges for "political development," statements from North Korea immediately denounced the Choi government as a perpetrator of Park's repressive Yushin system. The new government was called on to immediately repeal the Yushin system, eliminate the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), release all political

prisoners being held in South Korea, democratize society and achieve the peaceful reunification of the country through alliance with communism. Moreover, the United States was called on to withdraw military forces and nuclear weapons from South Korea and to not interfere in the internal affairs of South Korea.⁵² A 14 December 1979 cabinet reshuffle was unsuccessful in placating the North since those members newly appointed to the cabinet had been strong supporters of Park's administration.⁵³

Simultaneous with its denunciation of the Choi administration, the DPRK leadership took advantage of the confusion and chaos in the South by proposing reunification talks for propaganda value. On 24 January 1980, the Pyongyang government proposed a North-South prime ministers' meeting. From 6 February to 20 August 1980, ten rounds of negotiations were conducted in preparation for the meeting. However as the political situation of the South began to stabilize, the North suspended the contacts.⁵⁴ On 10 October 1980, North Korea advanced the confederal idea once again but this time referred to it as the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo and proposed it become the final form of government of a reunified Korea.⁵⁵

The election of Choi to the presidency was seen as a way to ease the political transition following Park's assassination. However, Choi was indecisive in meeting increasing student and opposition demands for a new

constitution and democratic transition, resulting in demonstrations and protests. As the student demonstrations became more intense and widespread, and the government proved unable to cope with them, the opportunity once again arose for military intervention in politics.

On 17 May 1980, the entire nation was placed under martial law and the army-backed government proceeded to round up dissidents and opposition politicians. The crackdown led immediately to a nine-day uprising in the city of Kwangju. Because the police were unable to control the several thousand demonstrators, Special Paratrooper Forces were called in to deal with the demonstrators. The brutality of these paratroopers inflamed the townspeople who joined in with the students. On 27 May 1980, army troops conducted a final assault and Kwangju was placed under military control.⁵⁶

Choi was perceived as having generally mishandled the situation in Kwangju which added to his reputation for "bumbling" in the eyes of the American military. Consequently, the ROK army put strong pressure on Choi to resign thus paving the way for Chun Doo Hwan to succeed him.⁵⁷

E. 1980-1988 (CHUN DOO HWAN)

Following Park's assassination, Major General Chun Doo Hwan, head of the Defense Security Command, was charged with the investigation of the assassination. Chun found "evidence"

to implicate several senior officers, including his own superiors, in the assassination. After their arrests, Chun was placed in command of the military. A limited martial law had been put into effect upon Park's assassination but Chun persuaded President Choi to declare a more extensive nationwide martial law to supersede it. Under the new martial law, Chun, who had also been named Acting Director of the KCIA, was not only responsible for maintaining law and order in the country but was also in charge of the government. Chun increasingly bypassed President Choi and arrested and removed many of the opposition leaders from the political scene in the name of political purification.⁵⁸ On 22 August 1980, Chun resigned from the army and on 30 August was elected president by the rubber-stamp electoral college, the National Conference for Unification (NCU).⁵⁹

As was to be expected, the North rejected the decision of the NCU and condemned the election of Chun. As with the administration of Choi, Chun was seen as a perpetuator of the Yushin system. Chun's former positions as head of the DSC and the KCIA contributed to the North's labeling him a "truculent strangler of democracy" whose "usurpation" of the presidency was totally illegal and whose election was not desired by the people.⁶⁰

President Chun's efforts at reunification were no more successful than those of his predecessor's. On 22 January 1982, Chun made public a unification formula that called for

participants from both sides to meet under the principles of national self-determination, democracy and peace in order to draft a unified constitution. Final unification would be accomplished through federal elections held in both sides under the terms of the constitution. North Korea denounced the idea as a political device intended to perpetuate the division.⁶¹

The election of Chun was followed closely by the election of Ronald Reagan in the United States. Mr. Reagan's hard-line anti-communist stance, as well as domestic controversy over the legitimacy of the new South Korean government, led North Korea to reduce its emphasis on the issue of US military withdrawal and focus efforts elsewhere. The Pyongyang government instead turned its attention toward accelerating its offensive against the Seoul government. This activity was highlighted by the 9 October 1983 bombing at Rangoon, Burma which killed 19 people including six key members of Chun's government.⁶²

The Rangoon incident was intended to kill Chun and top government leaders of the Seoul government, generating maximum confusion in the South and providing an opportunity for a "people's revolution." Pyongyang proposed a tripartite meeting in January 1984 in an attempt boost anti-government forces in the South and at the same time to make the North appear to be seriously interested in peace on the Korean peninsula. This activity was bolstered by the provision of

relief goods to the South, the 1984 North-South Economic Meeting at Panmunjom, Red Cross talks at Seoul and Pyongyang, and various Parliamentarian meetings. These efforts were not motivated by genuine concern but were aimed at improving South Koreans' perception of the North.⁶³

North Korea's efforts were complicated by Seoul's upcoming 1988 Summer Olympic games. The North anticipated a successful Seoul Olympic Games having the same effect as the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games had on Japan - focusing international attention on the ROK and providing opportunities for additional trade and commerce. The North Korean economy had continued to fall further behind that of the South and the Rangoon bombing had only served to turn international public opinion against the North, resulting in the further isolation from the rest of the world. Pyongyang tried several attempts at negotiations with the International Olympics Committee (IOC) for joint sponsorship of the 1988 Olympics but was unsuccessful. To make matters worse, the participation of the Soviet Union and many East European countries in the Seoul Games had been confirmed, frustrating the North's attempt at organizing a boycott. The North's desperation was made evident on 30 November 1987, when North Korean agents blew up KAL Flight 858 in an effort to cast doubt on Seoul's ability to provide security for the Games.

The North continued with image building efforts throughout the rest of Chun's administration by proposing a three-way

military meeting on June 17, 1986, a high-level South-North political and military meeting on January 11, 1987, a multi-national disarmament conference on 23 July 1987, a tripartite foreign ministers meeting on 6 August 1987, a joint South-North conference on 1 January 1988, and a joint North-South parliamentary meeting on 20 July 1988 to discuss the issue of the US military presence in Korea.⁶⁴

As the end of the Chun administration drew nearer, some doubt arose as to the sincerity of Chun's promise for a free election. The skepticism centered on the disagreement between Chun and the opposition over what form an elected government would take. Public pressure and an increase in campus demonstrations had forced Chun to agree to negotiations on the issue, however, many feared that Chun might try to force an unacceptable constitutional change through the National Assembly. The US government responded with increased pressure on the ROK government to agree to a constitutional plan that would produce a democratic system.⁶⁵

On 13 April 1987, Chun ordered a halt to all debate on the discussion of constitutional change for the selection of the next president until after the 1988 Summer Olympics had been held (and a president elected). In a nationally broadcast address, Chun told Koreans that he would keep the present electoral college system of selecting a president - a system that could be easily rigged to the government's advantage.⁶⁶

Chun's decision marked the turn to a harder official line and a crack-down on government opposition. Kim Dae Jung, a prominent anti-government figure in South Korea, was placed under house arrest and by mid-May 1987, at least a dozen of the opposition party's 67 National Assemblymen were under indictment or investigation on charges ranging from parking offenses to forgery.⁶⁷ When Chun announced the selection of former ROK Army General Roh Tae Woo as his chosen successor on 10 June 1987, demonstrations erupted throughout Korea.

The end of the demonstrations were brought about unexpectedly on 29 June 1987 by the chairman of the ruling party itself - Roh Tae Woo. Roh called for constitutional reform for direct presidential elections as well as the reinstatement of political rights of Kim Dae Jung.⁶⁸ This led to talks and an eventual compromise between government and opposition leaders concerning the basic outline of a new constitution.

North Korea responded to the selection of Roh and the subsequent turmoil during the waning days of the Chun administration by calling for a general overthrow of the South Korean "military dictatorship." The North saw the selection of Roh, a former ROK Army Lieutenant General and leader of army forces in the Kwangju incident, as another example of the continuation of the Park-Chun military dictatorship and called for the people of South Korea to force "military gangster" Roh

out of the presidential race and carry on direct presidential elections without him.⁶⁹

F. 1988-1992 (ROH TAE WOO)

President Roh Tae Woo's inauguration in February 1988 marked the beginning of a new era in ROK policy toward North Korea. The issue of Korean unification had achieved a level of public debate unmatched in previous administrations. The worldwide effects of Gorbachev's policy of Glasnost contributed to the strength of the discussion and the unification issue was adopted by the radical students in the South as their chief issue of protest. As a result, Roh was under immediate pressure to formulate a new policy toward North Korea.⁷⁰

In order to retain the initiative in government hands, Roh issued a declaration on 7 July 1988, outlining a new, more flexible policy toward North Korea. Upon taking office, Roh announced that South Korea would no longer seek to isolate communist North Korea but instead would work with the United States and other allies to help integrate the North into the international community. This policy of integration rather than isolation also put pressure on the United States to implement a similar shift in its policy toward the Pyongyang government. The United States, having taken its lead from Seoul, had maintained no diplomatic relations with the North and continued to classify it as a terrorist state.⁷¹

Roh's policy of Nordpolitik, or "Northern Politics," was designed to open diplomatic and economic channels with communist, socialist, formerly-communist and formerly-socialist nations.⁷² The six-point policy called for human exchanges, trade between North and South Korea, and improved diplomatic and trade relations between Seoul's key allies, the United States and Japan, and Pyongyang parallel to better ties between Pyongyang's main backers, China and the Soviet Union, and Seoul. By integrating the security interests of the ROK with the economic interests of the communist countries, South Korean relations with China, the Soviet Union, and other Communist countries, would be transformed from cross-contact to cross-recognition as either formal or de facto recognition was granted.⁷³

The policy was effective in restoring links with Seoul's former communist adversaries and led to a 19 August 1988 meeting between North and South Korea, their first talks since 1985. Yugoslavia opened a trade office in Seoul in October 1988. Diplomatic relations with South Korea were established with Hungary on 1 February 1989 and Poland on 1 November 1989. Eventually, even greater diplomatic coups were realized with the 4 June 1990 agreement between Roh and Gorbachev to establish diplomatic relations and the 24 August 1992 agreement for diplomatic relations between South Korea and China.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union produced further opportunities for the expansion of Roh's policies. Russian foreign policy makers were determined to forego the use of ideology and military issues to drive their foreign policy initiatives and instead focused their attention on economic issues. This policy change led to a formal agreement by South Korea to help Russia convert much of its defense industry to peaceful purposes⁷⁴ followed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin's visit to South Korea on 18 November 1992. Though Yeltsin's visit was to focus on economic issues and joint ventures, it also resulted in the signing of the new treaty of amity wherein Moscow pledged to help Korea's peaceful reunification.⁷⁵ Although exactly how this would be accomplished was not made clear, Amangueldy Irguebaev, political counselor at the Russian Embassy in Seoul, stated "Moscow has no plans to renounce the mutual defense treaty it signed with Pyongyang in 1961 but would not let it stand in the way of improving ties with Seoul."⁷⁶ This approach allows Moscow to maintain relations with both North and South Korea and provides an opportunity for inclusion in eventual reunification talks.

Although the apparent initial success of Nordpolitik inspired some hope for unification efforts, divergence of Northern and Southern policies continued. The August 1988 talks between North and South Korea failed primarily over the disagreement in linking the Olympic Games with a nonaggression

pact.⁷⁷ However, two important results were obtained. The first was North Korea's apparent concession that a nonaggression pact could be signed before US forces began withdrawing gradually from South Korea, a tremendous change from their former intransigence on this issue.⁷⁸ The second was an agreement to resume talks once the Games were over in October. The disagreement over Olympic issues was expected, however, many diplomats and observers believed the talks would break up amid verbal hostilities. The decision to continue contacts was unexpected and raised cautious hope for improved relations between the two Koreas.⁷⁹

On 4 June 1990, the ministers of North and South Korea met in Seoul for their first meetings since 1988. A series of talks began and on 13 December 1991, after many months of seemingly futile negotiations, resulted in the leaders of North and South Korea signing a treaty of reconciliation and nonaggression, renouncing the use of armed force against each other. This action when implemented may effectively end their 43-year-old state of war. The agreement also reestablished some measure of regular communication between the two countries, including telephone lines, mail, some economic exchanges and the reunion of some families who have been separated since war broke out in 1950. Although the accord failed to deal with such issues as North Korea's attempts to develop nuclear weapons, officials on both sides described the

accord as the first step toward what they term the inevitable reunification of the Korean peninsula.⁸⁰

As the end of the Roh administration drew nearer, concern on the peninsula was focused on North Korea's nuclear program. In July 1992, North Korea proposed tripartite talks with the United States and South Korea concerning nuclear policy. Previously, the North had proposed such three-way talks to give the impression that the United States was a necessary participant for South Korean officials to make such policy decision. However, this latest proposal was viewed more as a face-saving and encouraged US and ROK authorities to give more credence to the idea.⁸¹

By October 1992, the issue of nuclear inspection remained an unresolved issue, and the United States and South Korea announced the resumption of their annual "Team Spirit" exercise. In response, North Korea pulled out of the series of talks that had been ongoing since the signing of the nonaggression treaty, effectively ending further discussion of reunification in the final days of the Roh administration.

G. POST-1992 (KIM YOUNG SAM)

The election of President Kim Young Sam was the most peaceful transition of power in the history of South Korea. There were no riots in the streets and few charges of electoral fraud as there were in previous elections. Kim's victory with 41.4% of the vote indicated "the South Korean

people voted for stability and comfort; for change but within the comfort zone of the ruling Democratic Liberal Party."⁸²

This tranquil beginning is minor compensation for the many important decisions facing Kim in his pursuit of an effective and successful administration. In addition to economic reform, expansion of the democratic policies begun by Roh, and maintaining the precarious political balance that is sure to befall the first true civilian administration, Kim must cope with the full consequences of Nordpolitik and an increasingly isolated communist regime. Perhaps most importantly, Kim will have to contend with Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program which remains a dangerous stumbling block to reunification as well as a threat to regional security. As with the end of every previous administration, the division of the Korea peninsula remains a testament to the Cold War but with a North Korea more internationally isolated and possibly more desperate.

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IV. POST-COLD WAR CONSIDERATIONS

After the liberation from Japan, and through every proposal since then, both North and South Korea have considered the reunification of the peninsula an issue to be resolved by the Korean people. Cold War tensions, however, placed the matter within a broader context of super-power strategy. Improved relations between the major powers in the region have shifted attention away from the Cold War implications of the issue and created a new environment within which to address the internal (political-military, economic, socio-cultural) and external (foreign relations) factors that are fundamental to resolving the question of Korean unification.¹

A. POLITICAL-MILITARY

The divergent ideological paths of North and South Korea presents the greatest obstacle to a peaceful resolution of the Korea question. While the reduction of Cold War tensions cannot easily change the attitudes and the distrust each side has built up toward the other, some easing of obstinacy has occurred. The evolution of South Korean democracy has produced an environment of change wherein the Seoul government has attempted to ease inter-Korean tensions as world tensions have eased. Pyongyang resists these overtures and clings to

the belief that the socialist system of the DPRK will ultimately triumph.

Since its establishment in 1948, North Korea has been under the leadership of Kim Il Sung. Kim has maintained an absolute monopoly of power and created a cult of personality that has elevated him to near deity-like status in his country. His one-man dictatorship has been preserved through a combination of his personal charisma and his skill at manipulating the masses. Kim's political legitimacy has been further strengthened by his perceived nationalist fervor manifested in his chuch'e (national self-reliance) ideology. Kim has channeled this nationalist expression into purges of his opponents and the installation of a repressive system of internal control that has helped him consolidate and strengthen his political power. This has enabled him to create and maintain one of the most repressive regimes in the world.

North Korean national policy goals have been shaped by the conviction that it is the only legitimate government of the Korean people and the peninsula. The fact that it controls only the northern half of the peninsula is attributed to the interference of the United States and the "outlaw" government of the ROK. Kim continues to express his intention to unify the peninsula and to actively support and encourage the South Korean people in their "revolutionary struggle against the American imperialist aggressor and its puppet government in

the South."¹ He has persisted in his efforts to isolate South Korea politically and overshadow it economically by selectively soliciting military and economic aid from Soviet and Chinese allies. Even though the North accepted this aid, efforts continue to focus on building its economy and military with its own resources to limit outside influence. By focusing national efforts on military requirements first, North Korea has developed strong military forces with available resources for launching an offensive.²

The general charter of the Korean People's Army is to protect socialism and defend North Korea. More specifically its role is to support Kim Il Sung's authoritarian oligarchy and to unify the peninsula militarily if conditions favor a quick victory. Because of Kim's reliance on the military, high-ranking military officers hold key positions within the party and government and oversee all military and supporting civilian programs. North Korea depends on the armed forces to implement national policy and gives them top priority for personnel, supplies, and resources.³ Consequently, the armed forces are an important element of the party's power base in North Korean society.

Concerned with continuing his ideology after his death, the 80 year-old Kim has pursued an active campaign to ensure that control of the party, and the country, passes to his eldest son, Kim Jong Il.⁴ Documentary films have been produced about Kim Jong Il's life emphasizing his concern for the Korean

people. Having already been appointed supreme commander of the Korean People's Army in December 1991, these films seem to be part of an effort to build his image as a worthy successor to his father.⁶

In spite of the vastly divergent modern political cultures that exist between the Koreas, the post-Cold War environment has produced some positive change. Kim's persistent refusal to conduct business with the UN took a dramatic turn with the admittance of both Koreas to the UN. While Kim's previous intransigence on this issue was based on his claim that it would perpetuate the division, the real purpose was to eliminate outside interference in the Korean agenda thus allowing a revolutionary takeover of the South by supporting a "people's democratic revolution." Having attempted to put this policy into action in 1950, Kim's decision to join the UN signalled the North's first official change in its previously overt hostile outlook.⁷

During its seminal stages, the South Korean government adopted a stance similar to that of the North both in its claim to be the only legitimate government in Korea as well as in the dictatorial behavior of its first leader. The 1950 attempt by the North to force reunification left the two countries in a highly tense and hostile relationship and created a situation wherein the ROK government was compelled to try to cultivate democracy while struggling for national survival. Although a form of democracy has emerged, the

hostile conditions and persistent subversive activity of the North has resulted in a democracy decidedly different from that of the United States, Japan, and Western European countries.

Though rooted in the principles of a civilian democracy, the continued development of South Korea's government was markedly influenced by the US and the ROK militaries. US concerns over the containment of communism led to continual economic and military assistance to make the South a stronger ally against the North. With substantial US aid and technical support, Korea's army and air force were built up enough to discourage the North from attempting another invasion. The military became a powerful political and economic force and "the most technical and scientifically advanced sector in Korean society."⁵ This led to the creation of a highly developed military-industrial complex within the South which, in turn, led to a highly trained and equipped South Korean army and the development of a military elite.

General Park Chung Hee, capitalized on his own position within this elite by leading a coup d'etat and seizing control of the South Korean government in 1961. Once firmly established in power, Park filled many of the high-ranking government positions with his military comrades. The subsequent quasi-coup by General Chun Doo Hwan further entrenched the military in the Seoul government and made it an important element in South Korean politics. In this respect,

the functional role of military leaders in official positions of government is comparable to the role of military leaders in the North.

Since the 1987 presidential election, however, President Roh Tae Woo has set out to create true democratic reform and began to depoliticize the military establishment that has controlled the country's political process. In December 1990, the ROK government announced a new code of conduct for armed forces personnel that established detailed regulations barring them from political activities. Roh quietly and methodically retired politically ambitious senior officers and appointed generals with professional reputations to the key posts in the armed forces. In March 1991, he publicly warned his politically active relatives that "the next president should come neither from the army nor from my family circle."¹⁰

Increased national self-confidence has contributed to other reforms in this sometimes oppressive South Korean system. On 10 April 1992, a South Korean Defense Ministry official announced a general review was to be conducted of 41 laws to find obstacles to improvement of inter-Korean relations. For example, potentially offensive terms such as "North Korean Puppet Clique" would be changed to "North Korea."¹¹ Even the Military Security Protection Law, enacted after the 1972 proclamation of the yushin system, was declared by the Constitution Court to have "limited constitutionality," paving the way for greater freedom of the press and greater

public access to information. These laws were seen to have "lost their validity amid changes in reality, including the climate of rapprochement that has been created between North and South Korea."¹¹

B. ECONOMIC

The economies of both North and South Korea have done well, especially considering the post-Korean War devastation from which they began. Kim Il Sung's leadership provided political stability and a highly centralized economic approach. The economic development of North Korea has been carefully planned by the Pyongyang government which established distinct periods of economic development: (1) the post WWII/pre Korean war (1945-50), (2) the three-year rehabilitation period (1954-56), (3) the five-year plan (1956-61), (4) the first seven-year plan (1961-67), (5) buffer years (1967-70), (6) the six-year plan (1971-76), (7) buffer years (1977-78), (8) the second seven-year plan (1978-84), (9) buffer years (1984-86), (10) the third seven-year plan (1987-93).¹²

During the first and second periods, Pyongyang reconstructed factories and steadily built a socialist system. By using the highly centralized Stalinist system as a model, the North attained collectivization and rapid industrialization. However, as the economy developed and its structure became more complex, this centralized command

economy became a major handicap and served to slow down the rate of growth.¹³ A severe imbalance was created between heavy industry, light industry, and agriculture and from the third economic development periods onward, North Korea's economic progress has steadily declined.¹⁴

The North's internal economic problems were compounded by difficulties in loan repayments to other countries. In August 1987, 120 Western banks formally declared North Korea to be in default on \$750-810 million in loans.¹⁵ This resulted in Pyongyang's trading partners demanding payment in cash before conducting business. The collapse of the Soviet system and accompanying economic problems forced the Moscow government to reduce and eventually end its economic aid to the North. The chuch'e system has become a true test of the North's self-reliant capability.

South Korea's economic development initially lagged behind that of the North but grew rapidly with US assistance and the five-year plans of President Park. This growing economic development was spurred even further by the normalization of diplomatic relations with Japan in 1965 and support for the US effort in Vietnam.¹⁶ The growth of the South Korean economy has continued and now far surpasses that of North Korea. In 1990, South Korea's GNP was more than ten times greater than the that of North Korea (\$237.9 billion to \$23.1 billion) while the per capita GNP was more than five times greater (\$5,569 to \$1,064).¹⁷

Cut off from its traditional source of economic aid and faced with a stagnating economy, Pyongyang has been forced to look elsewhere for help. Early in 1991, Pyongyang approved direct trade between North and South Korean trading companies, the first such approval in DPRK history. This included \$4 million worth of South Korean color TV sets and sugar in exchange for 100 thousand tons of North Korean coal. By the end of November 1991, the total volume of North-South trade reached \$150 million.¹⁸ In January 1992, Daewoo chairman Kim Woo Choong, the first business leader to be officially invited to the North, agreed to establish eight light industrial factories in North Korea with an investment of \$10-20 million.¹⁹

And yet, even in the face of imminent economic collapse the Pyongyang government continues with the illusion of chuch'e. Rice and other foodstuffs received from the South were required to have any identifying marks removed and replaced with those of the DPRK. Markings on South Korean TV sets were replaced with markings of North Korean manufacturers. Even the ships that brought goods to the North were required to travel under the flag of a third nation to prevent North Korean dock workers from knowing they were receiving aid from their Southern brethren.

In December 1991, in order to alleviate its economic crisis and to respond to economic difficulties caused by the collapse of the socialist economic sphere, North Korea

disclosed its plan to form a "free economic trade zone" in the Tumen River region near the border with Russia and China.¹¹ The remarkable aspect of this initiative was Pyongyang's proposal that South Korea and Japan join the international project. Interpreting the signals coming from Pyongyang, it seems that North Korea has determined to discard the unproductive economic policy of self-reliance and boost its sagging economy by building up labor-intensive, export-oriented industries with foreign capital and technology.¹² Although limited, these may be North Korea's first steps toward economic reform.

Much of the inspiration for this economic activity stems from fears of a German-style unification or, even worse, economic collapse of the DPRK. The North is painfully aware that this kind of unification resulted in the political system of the socialist East being "swallowed up" by that of the West. The South has become cognizant of the tremendous economic costs that would be incurred both through absorbing the debt and rebuilding the infrastructure of the North.¹³ With these lessons in mind, both countries seem to be opting for more economic cooperation and renewed efforts for a peaceful, and voluntary, reunification.

C. SOCIO-CULTURAL

The conflicting ideologies under which the Korean people have lived for nearly half a century have produced social and

cultural differences that will influence reunification of the peninsula. Even a 5000-year homogeneous tradition and culture must suffer from the effects of opposed ideologies and divergent paths of modernization and industrialization.

North Korea is one of the most isolated and secluded societies in the world. The "cult of Kim" pervades all aspects of society. The individual is expected to show loyalty to Kim Il Sung by studying his philosophy daily. Education is directly controlled by the party and is used as a means of indoctrination in communist ideology. The people in the North have been infused with the idea that revolution by force is necessary and war is an inevitability.

The North Korean system concentrates on the nuclear family, breaking up the extended family and imposing a communist lifestyle on the total population to eliminate traditional cultural values. These traditional values and heritage are viewed negatively by the Pyongyang leadership because they are seen as threats to the party's authority and prestige. Knowledge of other people and world events is filtered through government controlled media before being transmitted to the masses. Information about the South is presented in the context of poor economic and social conditions. To Pyongyang, the ROK government remains a puppet regime of the imperialist Americans.¹⁴

As for the South, even under years of repressive authoritarian rule, a democratic trend has emerged to shape

the South Korean society. The experience of the Korean War and land reform in the 1950's changed South Korea from a rural and agrarian to an urban and industrial society. The gains made in industrialization, urbanization, education, and communications in the 1970s led to drastic rearrangements of social and economic relationships.²⁵ As a result, a dual social system has developed in contemporary South Korea. One is kin oriented, hierarchical, formalistic, Confucianist, and emphasizes tradition. The other is community oriented, egalitarian, informal, and stresses significant change. In spite of the dissimilarity, most Koreans accept both systems with equanimity.²⁶

The key to resolving the cultural and social differences between the North and South will be the willingness of the Korean people to accommodate each other in a changed environment. It will be necessary to determine which aspects of Korean culture each side has retained and those aspects that each has abandoned in order to foster a unified style of new cultural traits. Social customs that come from new ideological orientations will need to be identified, studied, and, when applicable, adopted. Both sides will need to seek commonality that will bring them together, rather than emphasize those differences that would separate them.

D. FOREIGN RELATIONS

Even though the question of Korean unification is of less concern to the international community in the post-Cold War world, the resolution remains of interest to, and will be influenced by, the four big powers in the region: the United States, Russia, China, and Japan. North and South Korea will be left to their own devices for resolution of the conflict as long as the means are peaceful and regional stability is maintained. If this condition continues, the four powers will no doubt be willing to accept a variety of changes in the status quo, although the trend toward resolution of Korea's division will be carefully monitored.

The common thread that runs through the policies of the four big powers is the desire to prevent any exclusive, monopolistic hegemony by one power in East Asia. The four major powers are becoming less hostile toward each other in East Asia. The national interest of each is to maintain peace and stability. For the foreseeable future, the four powers will attempt to reduce tensions in Korea as a means of reducing overall tensions among themselves.

1. United States

The fundamental approach of the United States toward the two Koreas has not greatly changed in the post-Cold War period, although some initiatives have occurred that could be optimistically referred to as advances. During January and

February 1990, the South Korean government stopped protesting the US troop cutbacks and accepted the closure of three US Air Force facilities. By June 1990, Seoul also agreed to bear the cost of relocating the US army facilities at Yongsan, located in the central part of the city, to a new location south of the capital near Osan Air Base.²⁸ Although its military presence has been reduced, the United States remains the ROK's main economic and military ally.

With the US-ROK relationship stable, the next step for the United States is to place additional emphasis on improving relations with the DPRK. In November 1988, the United States and North Korean governments began talks in Beijing at the embassy counsellor level, but this has resulted in little more than face-to-face contact. In late 1989 former senior State Department official Gaston Sigur became the first senior US figure to visit North Korea in a decade, while in 1990 North Korean academics also visited the United States.²⁹

More positive steps occurred on 13 May 1992 when North Korea turned over 15 coffins to the United States believed to contain the remains of US servicemen missing in action from the Korean War. 8,177 American servicemen are still unaccounted for while at least 389 were known to have been held alive at the end of the war.³⁰ Settlement of the MIA issue is one of the issues the United States has declared must be resolved as a prelude to better relations with North Korea.

The other issue is the question of North Korean nuclear weapons development.

The issue of North Korean nuclear weapons development is disturbing not just to the US-ROK alliance but to the entire Asian region. Even with the strong US-ROK relationship, continued US pressure on the North could eventually cause a split within that relationship if US actions are seen to be an impediment to the unification process. For its part, the United States removed all nuclear weapons from the South, which were neither confirmed nor denied having actually been there, and canceled the "Team Spirit" military exercise for 1991. The United States also exported \$10 million worth of wheat to North Korea in late 1991, part of a reported \$1.2 billion deal made by the US administration. This was claimed to be for humanitarian reasons allowable after a 1988 revision of the US law on trading with the enemy.³¹

In spite of US contributions to the effort, Kim has persisted with his anti-US rhetoric:

Taking advantage of the disappearance of their military rival and the destruction of the balance of forces, the modern imperialists are scheming to maintain and extend the old order of domination and subjugation, pinning hope on their military superiority.³²

Although the United States continues to support the peaceful reunification of Korea as a policy goal, Washington's attitude will remain ambivalent toward the issue. The policy makers in Washington believe that unification is an

internal matter which should be left to the Korean people. The United States will quietly support unification as long as there is no external interference and only through peaceful means.

2. Russia

After the Sino-Soviet split in 1956, the DPRK was confronted with the challenge of trying to maintain a semblance of neutrality in the face of mounting pressure for support from its communist allies. Pyongyang's initial response was to straddle the fence and maintain the semblance of an equidistant relationship with both countries. However, as the implications of the situation became more apparent, the Pyongyang government used the opportunity to capitalize on its position. By skillful political leaning toward one country - or the other - when conditions warranted, the DPRK was able to acquire aid from both Beijing and Moscow without giving up its political independence.

With the end of the Cold War, and the breakup of the Soviet empire, Pyongyang has been forced to give up its reliance on Moscow for aid. The priority of Russia's Asia policy has shifted from military to economic interests as its own economy has deteriorated. The end of the Cold War also lessened the strategic value of North Korea for Russian security; hence, the Russians have come to appreciate the economic value of the ROK more than any inherent value of a

relationship with the DPRK. At their San Francisco meeting on 4 June 1990, which symbolized the beginning of the Cold War thaw in Korea, Roh and Gorbachev agreed to establish full diplomatic relations.³⁴

The impact of Russian-South Korean rapprochement on Russian-North Korean relations resulted in a transition from a military alliance to a normal neighborhood relationship just as the former Soviet Union developed with the East European countries. It is also plausible that improving relations with South Korea was an attempt to pressure Pyongyang to reform and open its closed political system.³⁵ In sharp contrast to Gorbachev's visit to South Korea, no top Soviet or Russian leader has gone to North Korea despite Kim Il Sung's seven trips to the Soviet Union.³⁶

Like the United States, Russia is content to leave the unification issue to be resolved by North and South Korea. Moscow's main concern is to maintain stability in the North. There is a general consensus within Russian, United States, and South Korean political circles that the world community must build a policy concerning the DPRK proceeding from two principles. The first involves limiting North Korea's terrorist aspirations, especially its nuclear plans. The second one entails exerting influence upon the DPRK with the purpose of turning it into a more open country that embraces the road of reform in Asian socialism.³⁷

3. China

While North Korea was successful in its attempt to maintain a political balance between China and the Soviet Union, the similar ethnic and cultural traditions resulted in a natural tendency to lean more toward Beijing. Perhaps an even greater factor was the role China played by intervening and rescuing the Pyongyang government from the brink of disaster in the Korean War. With North Korea's increased isolation in the wake of glasnost and the decline of the socialist systems, China remains the only country that provides economic assistance.

In December 1990, North Korean Prime Minister Yon Hyong-muk visited Beijing and reportedly received a promise of about \$300 million (primarily food and oil) in relief aid. By December 1991 North Korea had actually received about one million tons of oil. However, even China's willingness to support the Northern regime had its limits as it declined to increase support for the North Korean regime when Kim Il Sung visited China in October 1991.³⁸ China's hesitancy to give additional assistance to the North had as much to do with increased Sino-Soviet cooperation as with China's own attempts at economic reform.

The developing Soviet relationship with the ROK also affected China's relationship with the South Korean government. China followed the Soviet lead and by 1990 had established official trade relations with South Korea. Sino-

South Korean trade grew to \$3.82 billion in 1990, several times the figure for Sino-Soviet trade,³⁹ and China, along with the Soviet Union, promised not to block South Korea's application for a seat at the United Nations. Pyongyang, perhaps sensing increasing international isolationism, also accepted a separate UN seat.⁴⁰

During 1991, China tilted even further toward Seoul reasoning it would be better off improving relations with South Korea and that it had less to lose if the Soviet Union should improve relations with North Korea. As the Soviet Union continued to breakup and South Korea's relationship easily converted to a relationship with Russia, PRC leadership gradually became less suspicious of ideological differences and more appreciative of the economic advantages to better relations with the ROK.

On 13 April 1992, South Korean Foreign Minister Yi Sang-ok met with Chinese Premier Li Peng who recommended closer political ties between the two countries, saying that leaders of the two nations should frequently cross-visit to promote understanding. For the first time they specifically stressed the need for diplomatic normalization. In a meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen, they shared the opinion that a diplomatic normalization would contribute greatly to peace and prosperity in the region and agreed to work closely together to establish ties.⁴¹ On 24 August

1992, these diplomatic efforts resulted in the signing of a normalisation agreement between the ROK and the PRC.

North Korea responded to the new relationship between South Korea and China with silence. News service attempts to obtain comments from the North Korean Embassy in Beijing were unsuccessful.⁴² However, on 25 August 1992, North Korea began to restrict Chinese tourists coming into the country. This was North Korea's clearest sign of its displeasure with the establishment of ROK-PRC diplomatic relations.⁴³

The question of reunification produces two responses within the government of the PRC. While some seem to hope the status quo will continue for the indefinite future,⁴⁴ others support reunification and would like relief from the burden of having to choose between the two Koreas. In the latter view, a unified Korea, maintaining good relations with China, would in fact be good for China's security situation.⁴⁵ Despite Beijing's relations with Moscow, Tokyo, and Washington, it cannot ignore Pyongyang because the security of Korea has been closely linked to the security of China itself since the 1950's.

4. Japan

Japan's colonial rule over Korea created deep animosities that continue to taint and impede full development of ROK-Japan and DPRK-Japan relations. Koreans resent what they regard as Japanese exploitation and manipulation, and

frequently accuse Japan of working to keep the peninsula divided. Japanese are regarded as looking down upon Koreans and Korean culture, especially in their treatment of the sizeable Korean minority in Japan.⁴⁶

A January 1991 visit by Japan's prime minister Toshiki Kaifu paved the way for development of better relations between the two countries. President Roh Tae Woo made a reciprocal visit to Tokyo in the same month and secured a promise that finger-printing of all ethnic Koreans in Japan would soon end. Emperor Akihito and Kaifu both apologized to Roh for Japan's wartime atrocities towards the Koreans.⁴⁷ Other issues, such as the trade deficit and technology transfer, continued to remain irritants to the two countries relations.

Tokyo's relations with Pyongyang, while improved, remain much more ambivalent. The first step toward normalization occurred on 27 September 1990 when the North Koreans announced to a visiting Japanese delegation that they wanted to start government-level negotiations on normalizing relations toward Pyongyang.⁴⁸ Normalisation talks between North Korea and Japan, however, hit a snag when Pyongyang demanded compensation for Japan's colonial rule over the Korean peninsula in 1910-1945, as well as for post-war damages. Tokyo only acknowledged Pyongyang's right to seek property damages linked to colonial rule, but not those incurred afterwards. Another sticking point was Japan's

insistence that North Korea sign a nuclear safeguards agreement to provide inspection of its nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency. The Pyongyang-Tokyo dialogue was temporarily halted after North Korea backtracked on an earlier pledge to sign the non-proliferation treaty in Vienna in September 1991.⁴⁹

Japan's approach to a unified Korea is tempered by different and sometimes conflicting interests. Some Japanese fear that a united Korea would be motivated to turn its military attention toward them. Korean animosity is tempered by economic reliance on Japan and Japan's stronger political position. A united Korea, on the other hand, may have the ability to translate anti-Japanese words into action.⁵⁰ In this respect, the policy of maintaining two Koreas could be in the Japanese national interest. Regardless, Japan considers the security of South Korea to be important to the economic, political, and military interests of Japan. Tokyo remains the number one foreign investor in South Korea. And the hostile division remains the key destabilizing factor in the region.

Japan will probably continue to pursue the maintenance of peace and stability in the Korean peninsula and play a positive role in the process of Korean unification. In this regard, Japan's ongoing negotiations with North Korea for the establishment of formal relations has an important bearing on the future of the Korean peninsula, and, accordingly, must proceed prudently so as to contribute to the smooth

development of the North-South relations, and enhance peace and unification of Korea.⁵¹

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V. OPTIONS FOR THE KOREAN PENINSULA

The governments of North and South Korea have used the issue of Korean unification as a propaganda platform for nearly five decades. Both governments have made it a practice to propose unification plans purely for propaganda value while completely rejecting the proposals of their counterparts. However, the international political climate has changed, and continues to change, allowing the issue of Korean unification to be approached in a new attitude of sincerity and cooperation.

A unified Korea must be decided according to the collective will of the entire Korean people. No unification formula is meaningful nor can it be materialized unless it is rooted in a national consensus.¹

North Korea has clung to the position that the question of Korea's reunification should be solved by Koreans themselves without interference from outside forces. While this appeal to Korean nationalism is a persuasive argument it also raises strong suspicions among South Koreans about the real intentions of the North Korean leadership. Exclusion of the United States from the process hints at the real intentions of the Pyongyang government to use appeals to nationalism to turn the situation into a civil war. South Koreans see the North's plan as a means of forcing an American troop withdrawal and excluding international involvement from the Korean

resolution, after which the North would invade the South under the guise of national liberation. Consequently, Pyongyang sees the presence of the United States as a major obstacle to making its unification program acceptable to the South Korean masses.¹

However much the North would like to pursue its own unification plan, events in the world may force both Korean governments to seek a more congruent political path. The collapse of the Soviet Union has further isolated the North while the South still enjoys a strong alliance with the United States. The South has opened relations with Russia and China while the North still clings to Chuch'e and the decaying socialist path. The deteriorating economy of the North has created pitiful living conditions while the South's economy has developed strongly and enjoys a trade surplus with several nations. The election of Roh Tae Woo was a step toward true liberal democracy while the North still suffers under the repressive dictatorial regime of Kim Il Sung. And the successful 1988 Seoul Olympics brought South Korea to the wider attention of the international community and cast doubt on the logic of the socialist revolution which included the "liberation of South Korea."²

Both countries deeply distrust each other and are aware that this distrust has prevented any sincere efforts at political reconciliation. The reasons for this hostility have been ingrained into the collective psyche of the Korean

people. First of all, the perception each Korea has of the other as the enemy has created an incredible sense of insecurity and led to the massive buildup of military forces. Second, North and South Korea have been governed under two distinctively different political ideologies since 1945. The influence of these ideologies on development has created South Korean economic and industrial systems that have far surpassed those of the North. Third, memories of the Korean War continue to haunt the Korean people and influence the relationship between them. Finally, any unification proposal elicits the question, "who is going to win" and adds to the mutual suspicion.⁴

The current stability of South Korea, both politically and economically, places it in a position of strength in dealing with the North Korean regime. However, using this position to pressure or coerce the North would only result in greater intransigence and instability. A more effective approach would be to adopt a policy of accommodation in dealing with North Korea. In this way, the focus of the relationship would be on recognizing and settling grievances of the North through negotiations and compromise.⁵ At the same time, it would be necessary for the South not to be extravagant with its accommodation. While this primarily one-sided compromise avoids a resort to violence as a means of settling disagreements, the North would interpret excessive

accommodation by the South as a confession of weakness and be tempted to respond accordingly.

Both North and South Korea have established plans for the unification of Korea, but each is based on unification with retention of their own political system. The real answer will not come about until both countries place the peaceful unification of the Korean peninsula above the political interests of their respective governments.

A. STEPS TOWARD POLITICAL INTEGRATION

There are two major factors that must be considered in an examination of the unification options. First, it is highly doubtful that full political integration will be achieved while North Korea is under the leadership of Kim Il Sung. Kim's self-enshrinement and iron-handed rule makes it highly improbable that he would willingly surrender to the virtual destruction of the system he has nurtured and perpetuated for nearly fifty years.

The second consideration is that hasty efforts to integrate the two conflicting systems into a single system might result in a chaotic and potentially violent situation. Korean nationalism has produced numerous competing factions, each of which has a vision of what a unified Korea should be. The sudden merging of the two systems would create a highly volatile situation. Perhaps a better example of swift integration, and one which is much more likely, would be based

on the economic collapse of the North. In this event, a unitary government would occur with Seoul becoming the capital of a unified Korea. This is an not an option currently desired by either the Seoul or Pyongyang governments. For any attempt at peaceful reunification to work it is necessary for the process to proceed on a gradual step-by-step basis.

The approach most likely to succeed is a building-block approach using various stages for building mutual trust and understanding.⁶ Within this framework, a series of medium-range goals would be established to serve as interim steps on the path toward eventual unification. The advantage of this system is that it allows both countries to work within a smaller framework and allows for gradual change without either country being at a disadvantage during the process. Within each stage, steps would then be taken to accomplish the short-range, tension reducing and trust building initiatives. The establishment of these medium-range plans also helps to reduce the anxiety created by focusing solely on the long-range reunification plan. Additionally, this system allows for stages to be bypassed as mutual trust is built.

Finally, even under Kim's rule, and barring an economic collapse in the North, this system would allow for progress through the first three stages resulting in an officially peaceful Korean peninsula without either country relinquishing its political system.

1. Hostile Coexistence

The first stage in the framework is hostile coexistence and is built around two conditions: (1) the intention of one Korea to reject the existence of the other, and (2) the existence of internal and external restraining conditions which prevent both Koreas from engaging in war. These are the characteristics of the relationship North and South Korea have endured since the division. Within this stage, both countries maintain opposing political systems and the military forces necessary to ensure their survival. Small conflicts and skirmishes occur but, in general, major military confrontation is avoided.

The major drawback to this stage of the framework is that it prevents further movement toward tension reduction and trust building efforts. A temporary ceasefire agreement is the only restraint to military conflict with no guarantee against the threat of broken peace agreements. Neither side will recognize the existence of the other, thus preventing any form of a mutual exchange program.

The national interests of the regional powers have been, and will continue to be, directly or indirectly related to the Korean situation. As a result these powers have encouraged the maintenance of the status quo, at a minimum, to prevent another armed conflict on the peninsula. As international relationships continue to change, both Koreas will be encouraged to move beyond this first stage and toward

a more stable peace structure, although not necessarily toward full unification.

2. Neutral Coexistence

As conditions improve between the two countries, the relationship will begin to shift to one of neutral coexistence.⁸ Four conditions have been set forth comprising this stage: (1) recognition of each Korea by the other, (2) signing of a non-aggression agreement, (3) mutual understanding of the impossibility of applying force, and (4) agreement to maintain the DMZ line along the 38th parallel. The important factor in this framework is that it allows for the "normalization" of relations without requiring detailed unification plans or the alteration of either government's structure. It is a confidence building measure that furthers the potential for future cooperation.

The advantage of this stage is that it avoids war and reduces, or even eliminates, a continued hostile relationship between Seoul and Pyongyang. The main disadvantage is that, while it does not require the alteration of either government's structure, it does require the alteration of some governmental policies. The DPRK maintains its stated policy to communize the whole of the peninsula and achieve peace after unification through a people's war. The ROK maintains its National Security Law which defines North Korea as an anti-state entity and punishes those who "praise, abet, or

even visit North Korea."¹⁰ In order for this stage in the framework to be achieved both Koreas must change their policies.

In December 1991, events tended more toward this stage when North and South Korea signed a bilateral nonaggression pact. This pact promised a renewed emphasis on exchange between the countries including phone lines, mail service, railroads, highways, reuniting families and limited economic exchanges. More importantly, each side pledged not to commit acts of terrorism or attempt to overthrow the other's government.¹¹

The new and developing relationships between the other regional powers give additional support to the idea of neutral coexistence. It is in the best interest of all to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula, and, at the same time, preserve the status quo with its distribution of power. Neutral coexistence is a highly desirable step to achieve this end.

3. Detente

Once a condition of neutral coexistence has been achieved, efforts can be made to move toward a condition of detente. A state of detente existed between the United States and the Soviet Union from 1969 to 1979 and provides the best example of the desired outcome. The motivation for the US-USSR detente was the realization that a Soviet-American war

would probably destroy the world as we know it. The resulting detente produced numerous summits, cultural exchanges, technical cooperation and a growth in US-Soviet trade.¹²

In its application to Korea, the stage of detente would elevate the communication process to a state of continuous, uninterrupted political dialogue. By the time this state has been reached, the two governments will have sufficiently reduced tensions which would facilitate reunion visits of divided families, economic exchange, and other limited social and cultural interactions. The official plans of both North and South have been based upon some kind of detente, but the plan of each has been to the detriment of the other.¹³

Detente theory argues that better relations between international adversaries must begin with steps taken at the top. As soon as the leaders agree, other forms of interaction will follow more easily, eventually gaining a momentum of their own.¹⁴ A step toward this end was taken in September 1991 when both Koreas received membership in the United Nations. Other common memberships in intergovernmental organizations would further increase this interaction. Once mutual diplomatic recognition developed, additional efforts would be put forth to create some degree of political community uniting them at the highest level. This would involve close cooperation at both the personal and national

levels to prevent threats to the political structure and to guarantee the people's freedom of movement.¹³

Another step toward detente is through cross-recognition. The cross-recognition plan, initially presented by US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1975, called for the United States and Japan to recognize North Korea diplomatically in exchange for China and the Soviet Union's opening of diplomatic relations with South Korea.¹⁴ The development of these relationships would make alliances and treaties negotiated by each half of the peninsula increasingly irrelevant and would lead to the consideration of new alliances and treaties in the context of a unified country. This would contribute to further erosion of residual Cold War attitudes and lead to a more pragmatic approach toward non-ideological issues such as travel and trade.

4. Confederation

The next stage in this process would be the establishment of a confederal form of government. As described by Professor Gabriel Almond¹⁵, under this decentralized form of administration, a central government is formed with power over foreign affairs and defense, but is dependent on financial and other support from the component states to implement this power. Although both North and South Korea agree to some extent concerning the potential merit of

adopting a confederal system, disagreements exists over specific proposals.

The idea of a confederation was first proposed as an interim plan by Kim Il Sung on 14 August 1960. The proposal was viewed by North Korean academics and officials as a necessary response to the divergent developmental paths of the two systems. In 1949, the differences between North and South systems were within manageable limits, and free elections throughout Korea would have allowed for setting up a centralized government and unifying the systems. By 1960, however, systemic differences had widened to such an extent that the immediate establishment of a unified government became an unrealistic goal and a system of confederation was proposed as a transitional measure.¹²

At the time of the 1960 proposal, North Korea had a political edge on South Korea and this unification scheme was seen in the South as little more than an attempt to draw Seoul into a confederation and then turn it into a communist system.¹³ It was not until the 4 July 1972 joint communique and the establishment of the South-North Coordinating Committee to implement the communique that a resemblance of compromise was achieved. However, the North's emphasis on political issues (deemed premature by the South, which desired a more gradualist approach) and the South's emphasis on cultural and economic exchanges to build trust first (deemed as obstructionist and considered delaying tactics by the

North) contributed to the failure to produce any substantial accords.

By 1980, the gap between the two systems had widened still further so that the idea of an eventual systemic unification had to be abandoned. Hence, North Korea proposed a confederation of the two separate systems as the most appropriate form of a unified state. Under this plan, economic, legal, and social matters would be handled by the ROK and DPRK as they wish. The central government would have a secretariat with limited functions which would not make law but would rely on moral persuasion. The two Koreas would cooperate in seeking solutions to mutual problems without giving up their autonomy. The central government would not have supremacy over the two regional governments and would not act directly upon individuals in the confederation. The plan calls for both sides to cut their military strength to 100,000-150,000 each and prohibit the presence of foreign troops and foreign military bases. It further suggests repealing all treaties and agreements with other countries, including military treaties, that are considered detrimental to national amity.

While some South Korean officials saw merit in some aspects of the plan, the proposal was viewed as simply a means to force the withdrawal of US troops from Korea after which North Korea would foment "national liberation" in the South. The South Korean government argued that, as presented by the

North, the confederation plan denies the SNCC which was set up on the basis of the 4 July 1972 joint communique as the principal point of contact. It was considered too ambiguous, not a fitting model for the two Koreas which have long had two divergent ideologies and socioeconomic systems, and an attempt by North Korea to legitimate itself internationally as equal to South Korea.²⁰

On 22 January 1982, Chun Doo Hwan proposed a counter-offer of sorts in the Formula for National Reconciliation and Democratic Unification. The formula consisted of a seven-point provisional agreement of basic relations between South and North Korea. The proposed agreement featured the maintenance of mutual relations based on the principle of reciprocity and equality, renunciation of the use of arms against each other, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, stoppage of the arms race, promotion of mutual exchanges and cooperation, mutual respect of each other's agreements and treaties with third countries, and the creation of their respective permanent missions in each other's areas.²¹

The similarities between the two ideas of confederation were not strong enough to overcome the basic differences. Pyongyang wasted no time in rejecting Chun's overture, while calling him "a traitor" who was inciting confrontation between the two Koreas in order to keep the peninsula permanently divided.²²

While the North's proposal was initially seen merely as a means for communization of the peninsula, the system itself may have a great deal of merit if used impartially. Under the DPRK plan a Supreme National Confederal Assembly (SNCA) would be formed with an equal number of representatives from each side and appropriate representation of overseas Koreans. A Confederal Standing Committee (CSC) would be organized by the SNCA to guide the regional government in the North and South and to administer all affairs of the confederal state. The SNCA and the CSC would make up the unified government of the confederal state.

The function of the unified government would be (1) to guide the two regional governments, (2) to evaluate political affairs, national defense problems, foreign affairs and other questions of common concern, (3) to push forward the work of equitable development of the entire peninsula, and (4) to increase cooperation between the North and the South in all areas. The regional governments would each follow an independent policy within the limits consistent with the fundamental interests and demands of the whole nation.¹³ North and South Korea would continue to be sovereign states, with separate armies, yet would be able to try to narrow their differences by creating joint bodies to develop exchanges, trade and foreign policy cooperation under a single flag.¹⁴

5. Commonwealth

The establishment of a commonwealth is perhaps the most important stage in the progress toward full unification of the Korean peninsula. This framework serves as an intermediary state between confederation and federation. The homogeneous population of Korea and the existence of only two states makes the confederal system a viable interim measure at best. On the other hand, the formation of a federation requires the surrendering of national sovereignty to the sovereignty of the newly formed federal government. A commonwealth forges the link between the confederation, with its weak basis for unification, and the federation, with its stronger basis for unification. The commonwealth proposal has the potential to satisfy the conditions which realistically divide the two Koreas, while at the same time striving for the common goal of unification.²⁵

The idea of a Korean Commonwealth was proposed by President Roh as an intermediary step in his Korean National Community Unification Formula (KNCUF). The Commonwealth would contain a Council of Presidents who would function as the highest decision-making organ. A Council of Ministers, co-chaired by the Prime Ministers, would consist of approximately ten cabinet ministers from each side and would deal with the various issues of the divided Korea through five standing committees -- 1) humanitarian affairs, 2) political affairs and diplomacy, 3) economic affairs, 4) military affairs, and

5) social and cultural affairs. A Council of Representatives, made up of approximately 100 legislators from each side, would have the responsibility to draft a constitution for a unified Korea, formulate methods and procedures for unification, and advise the Council of Ministers. After the Council of Representatives agreed on a draft of the constitution, the constitution would be finalized through the democratic process and followed by general elections for a unified legislature and a unified government.²⁶

Roh's KNCUF proposal was immediately rejected by the North. Although the traditional objections to the plan were voiced (presence of US forces, etc.), the similarities between the KNCUF and the DCRK contributed as much to the North's negative response as did the differences between the two plans. By rejecting outright the North's DCRK proposal, Seoul's proposal was interpreted as an act of arrogance.

Should the two countries reach a state of relations wherein compromise is acceptable, the commonwealth may be found to be a suitable alternative to the current division. By first establishing this commonwealth, integration could be achieved between the diametrically different North and South Korean societies. A common sphere of national life would be established with the purpose of restoring and strengthening a sense of national community before pushing on to forge political unity.²⁸

6. Federation

The formation of a federal form of government is the next stage toward which both Koreas would work. A federation differs from a confederal system in two main respects: (1) a federal government is usually stronger than its constituent governments with regard to organization, personnel, budget, and jurisdiction; (2) a federal government can act directly on individuals in all matters within the scope of the national government, whereas a confederal government can act only through its constituent government.²¹

The central focus of a federation system is the division of power between a central government and regional or state governments (Seoul and Pyongyang). The two states would merge their foreign affairs, military defense, economic systems, and legal systems, while retaining limited power in social matters performed through their officials and laws within their proper spheres of authority. Initially, the central government would maintain responsibility for external affairs, while the regional government would deal with internal affairs.

7. Unitary Government

The final step of this political integration process will be the shift to a unitary government. This highly centralized system of government has power and authority concentrated at the center. Regional and local units have

those powers specifically delegated to them from the central government, which may change or withdraw the powers at its discretion.¹

The development of a unitary government is a natural progression for the development of Korean political integration. The framework for this type of system is already present in the system of provincial government that exists in South Korea. Perhaps even more significant is the fact that Japan also follows a unitary system of government. The South Korean government, while not admitting it publicly, has relied on the Japanese model to help shape its own path for the future.

On 11 September 1989, Roh presented his Korean National Community Unification Formula (KNCUF) proposal in a speech to the ROK National Assembly. In addition to outlining the principles to guide unification, this proposal designated the type of government for the final unified Korea. First, the unification process should be guided by the principles of independence, peace, and democracy. Second, the unified Korea should be a democratic nation that guarantees the human rights of every individual and his right to seek happiness. This rules out the existence of any system that allows for special privileges, positions, or powers to specific individual, group, or class. Third, the legislature of the unified Korea should be a bicameral parliament composed of an upper house

based on regional representation and a lower house based on population.¹

The KNCUF proposal will not be readily accepted by the DPRK, nor should it be expected under current conditions. The avenue remains, however, for progress toward building trust and reducing tension and eventually establishing a politically integrated Korean peninsula. At the same time, the KNCUF could serve as a model for a "German solution," providing a strategy for a more quickly phased unification should the circumstances prevail.

B. OTHER ALTERNATIVES

The continued rule of Kim Il Sung, as well as his probable succession by Kim Jong Il, casts serious doubt on the full fruition of political integration on the Korean peninsula in the near future. Because of this, two additional alternatives need to be addressed: North Korean subversion of the South and unification through the use of armed forces. Both of these alternatives have been attempted by the North and under certain conditions could be attempted again.

1. Subversion of South Korea

The failure of the DPRK to unite the peninsula by force in 1950 resulted in a policy of guerilla warfare in the 1960s and 1970s. By 1962, Kim had drawn three conclusions about the ROK: (1) in spite of the political turmoil brought on by the Park coup d'etat, the ROK population and economy had

continued to grow and was far surpassing that of the DPRK; (2) Park's military background and emphasis on accelerated industrial growth, underscored his commitment to military strength; and (3) the economic boom had spawned serious dissent in the ROK. Kim had not surrendered his option to unite the peninsula through force but when the Soviet aid needed for conventional combat was suspended, Kim began considering Mao's concepts of unconventional war to bring about reunification.

His chance came when Park dispatched approximately 46,000 ROK soldiers and marines to assist the United States in Vietnam. Kim saw this as possibly his last opportunity to unite the country before the ROK troops came back benefitting from combat experience and the acquisition of new American weapons. From November 1966 until December 1969, American and South Korean forces battled North Korean special operations teams across the whole of the peninsula finally frustrating Kim's attempts at large-scale guerilla warfare.

Kim's rationale for his unsuccessful guerilla warfare attempt was based on the assumption that unification would come about if Seoul should prove unable to maintain its economic and political systems, and if it did not come naturally then Pyongyang would attempt to weaken South Korea by subversion. Currently, the Seoul government is politically stable, economically strong, and continues to maintain a strong alliance with the United States. Additionally, North

Korea's economic situation makes it doubtful that it would be able to support such subversion in the foreseeable future.

2. Unification by Force

The final scenario to be addressed is the possibility of an attempted armed "liberation" of one Korea by the other. North Korea attempted exactly this in 1950 and, while failing in its attempt, scored a kind of victory by preventing the US-led UN forces from conquering the North. Both Seoul and Washington are committed to a military buildup of the ROK to deter or defeat any additional attempts at forced unification.

The idea of liberation by force was also an official policy of the South Korean government, beginning with the Syngman Rhee administration and not officially abandoned until President Park's Joint Communique of 4 July 1972. Subsequent president's have indicated similar abandonment of this idea (Chun's 12 January 1981 and 5 June 1981 proposals for a South-North summit, Roh's policy of no more isolation, and signing of non-aggression treaty) and Southern initiatives have demonstrated the sincere desire for peaceful resolution to the Korean division. Furthermore, any attempt by the South to "liberate" the North would result in the receipt of a destroyed, as well as impoverished, North Korea.

The greatest external factor for stability on the Korean peninsula, as well as the rest of Northeast Asia, is the presence of US forces. As the post-Cold War era continues

to take shape, and new alliances and governmental systems emerge, these countries will view the United States as the neutral force preventing single power hegemony. The question that arises is when North and South Korea unite, will the United States continue to have a role on the peninsula?

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3. In-Taek Yu, "South Korea's Unification Policy after the Seoul Olympics," Korea Observer 19 (Winter 1988): 371-372.
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5. Paul M. Kennedy, "The Tradition of Appeasement in British Foreign Policy, 1865-1939," British Journal of International Studies, Vol. 2, No. 3, 1979, p. 195; as quoted in Yu, 370.
6. Tae-Hwan Kwak, In Search of Peace and Unification on the Korean Peninsula (Seoul: Seoul Computer Press, 1986), 72.
7. Young Jeh Kim, "The Future Alternatives of South Korea's Unification Policy," Korea and World Affairs 6 (Spring 1982): 147.
8. In this study, neutral coexistence refers to the agreement of North and South Korea to adopt a non-hostile relationship toward one another. This must be distinguished from neutrality as a state accepted policy characterized by non-interference and non-aggression toward other states. The framework under discussion does not rule out the possible acceptance of a policy of neutrality by a reunified Korea. See In Kwan Hwang, One Korea Via Permanent Neutrality: Peaceful Management of Korean Unification, (Cambridge: Shenkman Books, Inc., 1987); In Kwan Hwang, "The Problems and Possibilities of the Neutralized Reunification of Korea," Korea Observer 19 (Spring 1988): 43-68; In Kwan Hwang, The

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30. Almond, 104.

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VI. KOREAN UNIFICATION AND US INTERESTS

During the Cold War era, US foreign policy objectives in Korea were based primarily on utilization of the strategic value of the peninsula's geopolitical position in Northeast Asia. It was here that the major regional powers met and vied for control of the peninsula, either as a buffer for protection or as a route for further expansion. The United States played a unique role in this scenario in that, while not an Asian country in the geographic sense, its national interests were closely tied to developments in the region.

The primary interest of the United States in Korea during these years was to contain Soviet expansionism. To this end the United States provided aid and assistance to the ROK in exchange for military bases, personnel support, and some cost-sharing.¹ The evolving process of redefining US national interests refined US policy toward Korea to three basic and interrelated security tasks: (1) global strategy; (2) regional balance; and (3) local deterrence.²

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, decades-old security policies have become obsolete, necessitating reevaluation of US global strategy. The unification of Korea will most likely call for a similar reassessment of local deterrence, since the US role of "tripwire" will also become unnecessary. The final consideration, and the one entailing

the greatest commitment on the part of the United States, is what role the United States will play as a security factor in the region. This shift in circumstances now requires a reevaluation of Cold War inspired alliances and treaties, and an assessment of a unified Korea's effect on the major powers in the region and their policies.

A. REGIONAL EFFECTS OF REUNIFICATION

Korean unification will occur not as a solitary event, but will blend with several other broad and interrelated trends that are at work in the process of ending the Cold War in Asia. First, political alignments are being transformed with the end of the bipolar system that has dominated for so long. Second, nations are placing increased emphasis on economic factors. Third, pragmatism is winning over ideology in international relations. Finally, the failure of the communist system has become a trend, the effects of which are being felt even in Asia.³

Assuming a process of peaceful unification, the impact of these factors indicates that, at least for the short-term, the security environment of a unified Korea will remain relatively placid. The United States would obviously not be a threat nor would Russia, Japan, or China which, having already made efforts for improved relations with a divided Korea, would most likely continue to pursue friendly relations with a

unified Korea. What will be important is the impact a unified Korea will have on these countries in the longer term.

1. Russia

The geographic proximity of Russia to the Korean peninsula was unaffected by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Assuming the Russian Republic does not itself disintegrate, the approach to better relations made by the former Soviet leaders is just as appropriate for the leaders of the Russian Republic.

Russia will most likely continue to focus its energies on its own development, trying to adapt to a free market economy and break away from the communist mindset. The most practical course of action in this respect would be to reduce strategic and conventional military forces to allow material and personnel to be devoted to the process of industrial conversion of goods and services. Having been offered membership in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank,⁴ Russia has taken its place in the world economy and is unlikely to resort to military threats which could have an adverse effect on the capital, technology and management expertise provided by Europe, Japan, and the United States. The breakup of the Soviet Union has left Russia with a proportionally greater eastern region than it did of the Soviet Union as a whole. Former Soviet as well as Russian

Republic leaders hope that Korea, along with Japan, can help develop the frozen wilderness of Siberia.

A number of South Korean companies have already begun investing in the Russian Republic. In this regard, Russia may prefer the benefits it can derive from a wealthy South Korea to the reduced assistance resulting from a costly Korean reunification. Nevertheless, Russia undoubtedly recognizes the future potential of a reunified Korea and will be more likely to assume a cooperative relationship because of its own need for continued economic assistance.

2. China

The greatest impact Korean reunification would have on China would be the decreased regional influence brought on by the loss of China's alliance with the DPRK. Notwithstanding this alliance, the basic characteristic of China's foreign policy, as with other socialist countries, is its links to internal politics. It was this linkage that led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between South Korea and China on 22 August 1992, formally ending more than 40 years of hostility.⁵ A reunified Korea will serve to reinforce a Chinese policy of pragmatism based more on realities than on ideology.⁶

China's primary concerns are the issues of political and economic reform. Deng Xiaoping's efforts to bring about economic reform have been criticized by some hard-liners who

see it as betrayal of Mao's spirit and the communist system. The more prosperous provinces have taken more pragmatic, less ideological, positions leading to concerns of resurgent "warlordism."⁷ This has been further compounded by the crackdown on the pro-democracy movement at Tiananmen Square, and concerns over similar incidents. Additionally, as the aging leadership passes away, new pressures will come to bear on the new leadership for political reform as well. Refusal to do so could lead to violence within China with the possibility of it spilling across the nearly 900-mile border shared with Korea.

China needs an extended period of peace in order to modernize its economy, upgrade its industrial and defense capacity, and become strong enough to defend itself in the face of any future external threats. Consequently, the Beijing leadership needs to create and maintain political stability and unity at home and a peaceful environment in the surrounding region. The principal sources of the capital and technology needed to modernize China are Japan, the United States and Europe. China desires healthy relations with the other nations in the region in order to maintain economic cooperation. This is true of Korea and, to an even greater degree, Japan. Consequently, these premises should lead China to pursue an independent and peaceful foreign policy. This policy in turn would tend toward a regional policy of

maintaining stability and the existing balance in the Far East.⁸

3. Japan

Japan is unlikely to be a threat to the region in the short or medium term although much speculation has occurred concerning its long-term goals. For the time being, Japan will continue to focus on economic strength and will tend to approach a unified Korea as a potential market for its goods as well as a chance for profitable investment. Any Japanese fears over the potential for a unified Korea to be an economic rival for Japan are minimized by the fact that Japan's GNP is nearly twenty times that of South Korea⁹ and the unification process may be devastating to Seoul's economy.

There are also some circles in Japan who express concern over the possibility of a unified Korea becoming militarily belligerent and seeking revenge for Japan's extended occupation of Korea. This feeling is prompted by the fact that a reunified Korea today would possess a combined armed force nearly six times larger than that of contemporary Japan. Even after troop cuts, Korea is likely to retain an armed force twice that of Japan's.¹⁰ The value of this figure is diminished, however, by the fact that the Japanese government, spending only one percent of GNP on defense, could far surpass Korean defense expenditures and amass huge amounts of military armaments.

On the other hand, it is just as unlikely for Korea to be threatened by a revival of Japanese militarism. A deep seated pacifism among the Japanese people makes a threat through military forces even more unlikely for the short or medium term. Were Japan to choose a path of belligerence again it would seriously jeopardize its economic success. Belligerency would cause Asian nations, and possibly Western nations as well, to break off trade if they believed Japan was returning to militaristic expansionism. Korea would most likely not face that threat alone.

A greater indicator of a potentially peaceful relationship between Korea and the other regional powers is suggested by the lack of long-standing disagreements between the governments in question. While many of the Korean and Japanese people view each other with distaste, the governments of both countries have no territorial disputes or other issues that would be significant enough to cause outright war or even a rupturing of diplomatic relations. The bilateral situations between Korea and China, and Korea and Russia, are even better. Additionally, all of the major regional powers have strong pragmatic reasons for getting along with a unified Korea, and there seems to be few serious disagreements that would interfere with the development of such relations.

B. REDEFINING THE US-KOREA RELATIONSHIP

The US-ROK mutual security treaty was forged in the Cold War to allow the United States the option of defending South Korea in the event of another North Korean attack. With the unification of Korea, the prime question to be addressed is, what will be the new role of the United States on the Korean peninsula? The answer to this question will be based on the stance the unified government takes in its approach to the drastically changed security environment and the existence of few immediate threats.

Because of Korea's unique geostrategic location, it must formulate a policy that can be acceptable not only to the two Korean regimes but also to the four external powers which all have vested security interests in the Korean peninsula.¹¹

In redefining the US-ROK security relationship, one option that is available to US officials is that of total withdrawal of US forces from the Korean peninsula. The proponents of this course of action view US troop withdrawal not just as a long term option but as a necessary step prior to unification. Removal of the US "tripwire" would serve as a sign of good faith to the DPRK government as well as allow the United States to be more judicious in choosing when and where to intervene in a conflict. This view is further supported by the increased economic and military capabilities of South Korea as well as by the economic difficulties of the United States. "As long as the United States is willing to promise

direct intervention in the event of a war, the South has no incentive to make the same degree of sacrifice for its military that the North does."¹²

While the US course of action will undoubtedly have some effect on a unified Korea's redefining of a security relationship, the unified Korean government would have its own alternatives which may or may not include reliance on US military forces.¹³ There are four options that could be considered the more probable alternatives for a unified Korean government. The possibility exists for Korea to transition through each of these options, to achieve a balance most suitable to the peninsula and its unique conditions either as a result of domestic politics or as a result of policy making. Yet it is the unknown factors, such as a resurgent militarist Japan, overthrow of the reform government in Moscow, or an expansionist China, that may prompt a unified Korean government to maintain some type of relationship with Washington and reliance on the United States to help prevent instability and war once a single Korea has emerged.

1. Exclusive Alliance

The first possibility to be considered does not assume a fully independent Korea, but assumes Korea will maintain a single sponsor for its security. Under this option, China, Japan, or Russia would assume the same relationship with a

unified Korea that the United States maintained with the ROK, namely that of sole security partner.

For some Koreans, the idea of an alliance with China appeals to certain ethnic feelings. Culturally China is perhaps a better match for Korea than the United States, and an alliance with an Asian nation seems more appropriate to some Koreans than one with the United States. A partnership with Japan is much less likely than with China, but should the United States withdraw from the region, and Japan rearm massively, a Korea-Japan alliance may be preferable to a repeat of 1910. And while a partnership with Russia would be the least likely, considering historical precedence and Russia's internal problems, this might be preferable to being absorbed by a more powerful Asian neighbor.

The most likely situation though, should a unified Korea choose this scenario, is a continuation of an alliance with the United States to guarantee its security. First and foremost are the relationships that have been established since 1945. Second, while the United States has great interests in the region, the location of the United States places it outside the area of direct geographic involvement, and is least likely to interfere in Korean domestic issues or become an active threat to Korea. A broken US-Korea alliance would no doubt leave hard feelings and few options for Korea if China were to become a more expansionist regime. Finally, the great powers of the region are in general agreement that

US troops should remain in Korea as a force for regional stability, even though that number could be cut back from 39,500 to as few as 10,000.¹⁴ In short, the United States will remain Korea's best bet for a security partner even after unification.

2. Collective Security

The next possibility would be for Korea to take a collective security approach. This scenario assumes, if one nation-state acts as an aggressor, then other nation-states have a responsibility and duty to act against and, if need be, punish the aggressor.¹⁵ The limitation of this approach is that, for it to work, all nations involved must follow the rules needed for the collective security system to prosper and survive. It takes a clear definition of aggression and a guarantee that the other members will act against such aggression.¹⁶ The ambiguity of this approach indicates that a multilateral collective security approach is not nearly as effective as the existing bilateral ties that currently exist.

The idea of collective security, however, should not be totally discounted but should be placed within the framework of bilateral relations in the regional alignments. Bilateral commitments, particularly the US-Japan and US-Korea axes, would be easier to justify to the American taxpayer if considered as part of a multilateral, regional stability framework. This approach would entail more burden-sharing by

US allies in the context of regional stability and would help to justify US defense expenditures in the region, albeit on a reduced basis. This arrangement would also provide a forum where regional members could air grievances and resolve disputes in a nonviolent manner. "Collective security will not be a substitute for bilateral agreements, but it will become an increasingly important complement to them."¹⁷

3. Korean Neutrality

The concept of neutrality has been proposed by In Kwan Hwang as a pre-unification approach aimed at reducing tension, contributing to the unification process.¹⁸ In the current context, however, political neutrality could be adopted as a national policy along the lines of those successfully adopted by Switzerland and Austria. Under this neutrality concept, Korea would remain nonaligned with other powers and neutral in major power disputes. While a portion of the existing military would be converted to a militia (homeland reserve) while maintaining a small, tough core of an armed force, Korea's neutrality would be generally considered an unarmed neutrality. Under this approach a reunified Korea would not be considered a threat to Asia in the way that Germany is often perceived of being to Europe. Ironically, a policy of neutrality would allow a unified Korea to play the large powers off one another much as the DPRK did with China and the Soviet Union.

However, the concept of neutrality takes on new meaning in the post-Cold War era because the strict bipolar alignments that once existed are no more. Any potential, new threats that may occur down the road inevitably come back to the geostrategic role of Korea among the big powers. Neutrality would leave Korea in the path of an aggressor with a national policy that precludes reliance on an established alliance. Bargaining for an alliance at that hypothetical point would place Korea in a weak position which could ultimately lead to greater conflict in the region. Korea would once again be in a position of bystander as it was during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars of the late 19th and early 20th centuries only this time capable of creating its own devastation with its mass of modern firepower. With this scenario in mind, most Koreans would be uncomfortable rejecting the security relationship with the United States in favor of a mostly disarmed neutrality.

4. Independent Nationalism

The final option in our consideration of options would be for Korea to adopt a position of independent nationalism or armed neutrality. Under this option Korea would adopt a form of neutrality but it would be one of armed neutrality, eschewing security relationships to embrace a position of nationalistic self-reliance. The seeds for this adoption of this approach were sown under South Korea's first (1971-75)

and second (1976-81) five-year Force Improvement Plans (FIP). In 1971, the United States financed as much as \$1.5 billion as compensation for ROK military cooperation during the Vietnam War. By 1975, the level of the ROK's self-reliance was confirmed by the ceasing of US grant aid. President Park's ambition to achieve "self-reliant national defense" was assisted by \$6.5 billion in military and \$5.6 billion in military aid from 1976 to 1981. By 1981, the foundation of the independent South Korean arms industry was substantially completed.¹⁹

The adoption of independent nationalism as government policy would see a continuation, and acceleration, of force improvement projects. However, the keystone for a unified Korea under this option might be for Korea to capitalize on the combined North and South nuclear technologies to amass a significant nuclear arsenal.²⁰ While the appeal to nationalist, far-right wing groups is obvious, presentation of this option posed as armed neutrality could persuade a large portion of the Korean population to overlook the inherent risks and limitations of this option and prevent alienation of the greater majority.

C. US REGIONAL SECURITY RELATIONS

On 2 August 1990, President George Bush unveiled his new national security strategy for the United States. The rationale for this new strategy was based on the political

changes in the world and led to the further development of the specific national interests and selected objectives for the United States:

1. The survival of the United States as a free and independent nation, with its fundamental values intact and its institutions and people secure.
2. A healthy and growing US economy to ensure opportunity for individual prosperity and resources for national endeavors at home and abroad.
3. Healthy, cooperative and politically vigorous relations with allies and friendly nations.
4. A stable and secure world, where political and economic freedom, human rights, and democratic institutions flourish.²¹

For many Americans, the state of the US economy has become the priority concern. The dissipating threat from the former Soviet Union has made it difficult to justify maintaining the large armed forces built up during the 1980s. Consequently, many look for a reduction in those forces and redistributing the money from this "peace dividend" to take care of economic problems at home. Projections by US experts indicate that US defense spending will decline below the 3.6% of GNP called for by FY1995, and could be as low as 1% of GNP by the year 2000, a low not seen since the defense budgets of the 1920s. Barring a period of rapid growth in the US GNP, a defense budget of 1% of GNP would entail a drastically reduced military with little capability to assist in maintaining regional stability to the extent the United States has done in the past.

This trend toward a smaller defense budget means US forces in the Pacific, as well as the Atlantic, would not only be reduced but also restructured. The reduced forces in the Pacific and Atlantic components would be supplemented with a contingency response force when the local situation requires.²³ This new strategy "accentuates the value of mobile, flexible forces that move about and are not dependent on bases."²⁴

While some Americans would argue for adopting an "isolationist" stance and removing US forces from foreign soil,²⁵ policy-makers are aware of the importance of Northeast Asia to US trade. While much media attention focuses on the economic success of Asian nations, the fact that US-Pacific trade exceeds US-Atlantic trade by 50% is often overlooked.²⁶ This situation is aggravated by the difficulty the United States has had in shifting the role from teacher to student in economic issues.

The role of the US military in Northeast Asia will be affected by the extent to which these countries adhere to the principles of free-trade as proposed by the United States. The United States has put pressure on these nations to move toward market liberalization and to observe more closely the tenets of free-trade. However, continued pressure by the United States on trade issues could adversely affect other relationships as well:

The United States officially supports the notion of unification, but not at the cost of allowing Korea to maintain market barriers to United States goods and businesses or allowing cheap Korean products to flood US markets.²⁸

President Bill Clinton has declared that he will "focus like a laser beam on the economy, and foreign policy will come into play in part as it affects the economy."²⁹ While some Asian nations may interpret this statement as a less than whole-hearted commitment to the region, his attitude toward Korea remains relatively conservative. This is reflected in his pledge that US troops would remain in Korea as long as North Korea continues to be a threat. This pledge, while indicating an effort to maintain continuity with the policies of previous administrations, could also be construed as an attempt to avoid one of former-President Carter's biggest foreign policy mistakes of calling for a rapid withdrawal of forces in Korea.³⁰

The unification of Korea will add a new dimension to the discussion of economic relations. The ROK has been more receptive to US pressure than Japan, and as Korea comes to terms with the economic costs incurred through the unification process and takes optimal advantage of the combined resources of a unified country this receptivity could be of benefit to the United States. For the United States, continued support and assistance will contribute to the stability necessary for

Korea to forge ahead, furthering the potential for US trade and adding to stability in the region.

Another important role for the United States in its relations with Korea and Japan will be to serve as a mediator to discourage military competition between the two. The regional military commitment of the United States has been important in deterring Japan from pursuing a military course, and would be equally important in persuading Korea to reduce its armed forces to levels not considered provocative in the region. A continued commitment by the United States, in conjunction with the UN or regional coalitions, could dissuade both countries from feeling the necessity to pursue an arms buildup.

Finally, the various reforms being pursued in both Russia and China will be aided primarily by the United States, politically if not economically. To prevent a fear of renewed aggression toward Asian allies of the United States, the United States would benefit by continuing to extend its nuclear umbrella over Japan and a unified Korea. In this way, the tendency for nuclear proliferation would be kept at bay and some degree of leverage would be maintained by the United States.

US interests in the Western Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean, will probably continue to require a military commitment. The importance of the region to the US economy, as well as possible future strategic reasons, necessitates an

American role in maintaining stability and a US presence in the region. A unified Korea will create a new environment for the United States. The benefits or detriments of this environment to US interests could well be determined by the presence of US forces serving as a stabilizing influence in this economically important area.³⁰

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VII. CONCLUSION

The reunification of the Korean peninsula remains an important priority for all Koreans. Despite the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent transformation of global politics, the Korean peninsula remains an area where Cold War-style attitudes still prevail. This situation continues because North Korea continues to adhere to its delusive policy of chuch'e and antagonism toward the South. The changing relationships of the regional powers have created a new environment of freedom and cooperation that will further isolate the North if it continues to follow its chosen path.

A look back at Korea's reunification attempts reflects the ebb and flow of international and domestic factors upon the process. Each country has sought unification on its own terms and, since each side's approach has been totally unacceptable to the other side, used the unification issue as a means for dispensing propaganda. For the South this process has been made even more difficult by its own economic success and its attempts at molding a more democratic government.

There is no external country or individual that can coordinate the unification policies of North and South Korea. The reunification of Korea is an issue to be resolved by the Korean people. Yet, the international community can play an important role in reducing tensions and encouraging the

North's participation in diplomatic and economic initiatives. Improved world relations have shifted attention away from the Cold War implications of the reunification issue and created a new environment within which to address the question.

Two points should be stressed in addressing the Korea issue. First, the United States should maintain flexibility and adaptability in its security relations with Korea. Steps should be adopted to give the Korean government more operational control of their own forces, to promote military self-reliance in South Korea, and to directly address the perceived causes of anti-Americanism that persist in the South. Such steps as these should be adopted before unification and continue during and after the process. This would not only facilitate reunification but would help to prevent the deterioration of the existing relationship. Second, the United States should continue to pursue initiatives toward establishing better relations with North Korea. The role the United States plays vis-a-vis a unified Korea will be influenced by the extent to which the United States assists in the unification process.

The post-Cold War era will continue to see a shift from a primarily bipolar international system to one that is more multipolar, militarily, economically and politically. For the rest of the 1990s and into the 2000s, alliances in Northeast Asia will continue to be reappraised as security interests are being reassessed. As the balance of power is increasingly

determined by economic issues as well as by military ones, China, Russia, Japan and the United States will all reevaluate their current role in the region. Economics and politics probably will overshadow military concerns for the top attention of policymakers.

In this new environment, and with the unification of Korea, security ties between the United States and Korea may be as important as ever. The United States' willingness to make such commitments is the result of continued reevaluation of US security needs and objectives in the Western Pacific. President Clinton has pledged to continue such commitments as long as regional stability is threatened. A unified Korea will continue to maintain its geostrategic importance while the United States could serve to help reduce hostilities, prevent a regional arms race, and pursue better interregional security arrangements. A stable Korean peninsula will be necessary for regional peace, and US commitments to the region can help determine the success of such an outcome. It is important for American leaders to reassess the importance of Korea in an evolving situation and make decisions about the US commitment to Korea that serve both countries' interests.

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